



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY — 22 AUG 2022



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	08/22 Pay to have messages on Ukraine shells
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/22/world/europe/ukraine-artillery-shells.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/22/world/europe/ukraine-artillery-shells.html</a>
GIST	<p>Artem Poliukhovych, a 32-year-old Ukrainian, had been thinking for a year about how to propose to his girlfriend. He considered kneeling on a beach on a tropical island or asking her to marry him on a hot-air balloon ride. In the end, he decided to have the proposal written on a Soviet-era shell targeting the Russian military.</p> <p>“It can be considered in some way an aggressive proposal,” he said.</p> <p>She said “yes.” Her enthusiasm is matched by other people around the world. Several hundred have paid thousands of dollars to have their words written on shells used by the Ukrainian Army.</p> <p>War is often pervaded with gallows humor, and soldiers have long scrawled graffiti on munitions meant for the enemy. Selling such messages marks an inventive, if macabre, twist on the practice, another way Ukrainians have found to raise money for their underdog resistance to Russia’s invasion.</p> <p>One shell bore the tag “This one’s a gay bomb.” Another read, “Fighting fascism is a full-time job.” And another was signed: “From Silicon Valley with love.”</p> <p>These latest tags were ordered from <a href="#">Signmyrocket.com</a>, the most prominent of several fund-raising initiatives in Ukraine’s burgeoning personalized shells sector.</p> <p>The fund-raiser, which calls itself “artillery mailing,” was created by Anton Sokolenko, a 21-year-old information technology student, to compensate for a drop in donations to the <a href="#">Center for Assistance to the Army, Veterans and Their Families</a>, the charity for which he had started volunteering in March.</p> <p>He initially ran it on a Telegram channel, and then moved to a website to allow international costumers to gain access to it. Now, he said, requests come from all over the world, with more than 95 percent of the writing in English. The website says it has raised more than \$200,000 dollars in donations in less than three months for the charity.</p> <p>Buyers get pictures of their message on a shell. For a higher price, the charity also provides videos as the shell is launched — “to show their friends or post on social media,” Mr. Sokolenko said.</p> <p>On the site, users can pick a weapon, type in a message and then proceed to check out. Prices range from \$150 for a message on a Howitzer shell to \$3,000 for one written on the side of a tank’s turret.</p> <p>The site says the charity has delivered more than 200 permanent markers to soldiers, who offered to write on the weapons and photograph the result in return for cars, drones or optical equipment that the charity has purchased across Europe with the profits. Mr. Sokolenko said that the charity had many contacts in the military, and that he had reached soldiers through word of mouth.</p> <p>A spokeswoman for Ukraine’s Defense Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>For some people, buying a message is a way to help the Ukrainian Army and to feel directly involved in the war effort. For others, it is a chance to express their anger at Russia.</p> <p>Mr. Sokolenko described the process as an informal way for military platoons to support themselves. “It’s not very official, and not very allowed,” Mr. Sokolenko said. “But they kind of need to do it because we can give them stuff that our government cannot give them right now.”</p>

	<p>Cristina Repetti, 32, who lives in Chicago, said that she was shocked by the aggression of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and that she had commissioned several messages on shells for friends and family members.</p> <p>She expressed some discomfort with the idea that the weapons could be used to kill soldiers who might be at war against their will, but her desire to help Ukraine was bigger. "I can't just sit there and do nothing"</p> <p>On one shell, she commissioned the message "I love you Vinny," in the hopes of getting her boyfriend back.</p> <p>"He is into dark romantic things," she said. "And I thought that putting our love on a shell that is going to hit a Russian tank would really make an impression."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Temperatures soar, heart disease rate too</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/rise-heart-disease-explained-extreme-weather-conditions-study/story?id=88259158">https://abcnews.go.com/US/rise-heart-disease-explained-extreme-weather-conditions-study/story?id=88259158</a>
GIST	<p>Dr. Martha Gulati will never forget the first time she saw a young, healthy athlete die of heat stroke.</p> <p>It was 1995 in Chicago, in the middle of a heat wave that would ultimately claim nearly 700 lives. In the decades that followed, Gulati watched in alarm as the climate warmed and heat catastrophes <a href="#">grew even more intense</a>.</p> <p>"The medical community was not prepared for what these temperatures would do to people; we were ultimately learning on the fly," said Gulati, now associate director of the Barbra Streisand Women's Heart Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles and president of the American Society of Preventive Cardiology.</p> <p>Since that heat wave in 1995, <a href="#">climate change has intensified globally</a> with wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, heat waves and cold spells leading to famine and drought. As a result of these extreme changes, the medical community is noticing an increasing rate of heart disease.</p> <p>"The world we live in right now is not a very hospitable environment for the heart," Gulati said. "With heart disease prevention, we tend to focus on controlling blood pressure and lipids, but we should consider the other aspects of prevention, like our environment."</p> <p>Sixty-two percent of deaths attributed to climate change were from cardiovascular disease, according to <a href="#">a study published in Lancet</a> in 2020.</p> <p>"We know that air pollution is a cause of heart disease," said Dr. Sadeer Al-Kindi, a cardiologist at University Hospitals in Ohio and assistant professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. "Evidence shows that air pollution increases heart disease, heart failure and insulin resistance."</p> <p>Particulate matter, tiny particles in the air invisible to the naked eye, are produced by greenhouse gasses and carbon emissions. These particles can enter your lungs and bloodstream, wreaking havoc on tissues that are vital to a healthy cardiovascular system. Over time, prolonged exposure to pollution can contribute to increased clotting, high blood pressure and sleep disturbances.</p> <p>Dr. Kai Chen, assistant professor at the Yale School of Public Health and director of research at the Yale Center on Climate Change and Health, said that when inhaled, these pollutants cause stress and inflammation in the body that can result in cardiometabolic syndromes, such as hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes.</p>

Experts say it's difficult to directly blame individual heart attacks on heat waves based on currently available data. However, there is research to suggest a close relationship, as regions with excessive heat or freezing temperature had alarmingly higher episodes of heart attack, according to [a June study in Nature Reviews Cardiology](#).

It's not clear exactly why temperature shifts are correlated with higher rates of heart attacks. Experts believe that temperature shifts affect the body's ability to regulate normal body temperatures in response to the extreme temperatures.

Al-Kindi said that a concept called "climate penalty" could explain these patterns. Extreme weather conditions from climate change are able to increase and distribute those invisible molecules that are detrimental to our body, he said.

"Fires, winds, heat and cold driven by climate change increases the production and distribution of these pollutants," Al-Kindi said. "[Climate change] both directly elevates the number of particles in the air that people breathe in, but also indirectly by causing droughts, famine, malnutrition and limiting accessibility to care."

A [study published earlier this month](#) in the journal Nature Cardiovascular Research found that even medications used to treat heart disease may work differently during heat waves.

Chen, who was the lead author in the study, found that patients who were taking two medications used to treat heart disease had higher rates of heart attacks on days with record heat waves.

Regardless of the age, people who were on beta blockers and antiplatelet medications had a number of heart attacks, explained Chen.

"What is interesting," Chen said, "is that young people on the same medications, who we typically do not expect to have heart disease, also had higher episodes of heart attacks than those who were not taking these medications."

Al-Kindi, who was not involved in the study, believes this paradox of medications treating heart disease causing more heart attacks on extremely hot days could be from blunting our nervous system that regulates our "fight or flight" response and regulates the way we respond to temperature.

While avoiding cigarettes, eating healthy, sleeping well and exercising are ways to prevent heart disease, doctors agree that protecting yourself from the impacts of climate change is essential to your heart health.

Experts advise changes should be made as a community by reducing plastic waste, using public transport, recycling, avoiding red meat and advocating for policies to help prevent worsening climate change.

On an individual level, Al-Kindi said people should stay inside on extremely hot and cold days, avoid pollutants by wearing a mask, move away from fossil fuels and move toward clean energy.

"The impact of climate change is not a question of whether it's happening -- it is happening and we are seeing evidence of it every day," said Gulati. "If we don't act now, we won't save lives and our job as physicians is to save lives."

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HEADLINE	08/21 Flood alerts impact 12M West, Southwest
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/monsoon-rains-contributing-looming-flash-flooding-threat-millions/story?id=88658532">https://abcnews.go.com/US/monsoon-rains-contributing-looming-flash-flooding-threat-millions/story?id=88658532</a>

<b>GIST</b>	<p>Monsoon rains are causing a flash flooding threat to linger over a large swath of the Western U.S. following several flooding events overnight.</p> <p>Flash flood events were reported over the desert Southwest Saturday night into Sunday morning, with Moab, Utah, experiencing flooding that spilled from streets to businesses and mud piling up on storefronts.</p> <p>In New Mexico's Carlsbad Caverns National Park, more than 100 people were evacuated after being stuck for hours due to impassable roadways.</p> <p>More than 12 million people from Arizona to Louisiana were under flood alerts on Sunday morning.</p> <p>Drought conditions in the region are causing the sudden burst of rain to mix with the parched soil as if it were concrete, leading to flash flooding.</p> <p>The megadrought combined with record heat is also increasing fire threats farther west.</p> <p>Dry conditions and hot temperatures are continuing in the Pacific Northwest. Fire weather watches have been ordered for northeastern Oregon and southern Washington due to the potential for abundant lightning, and a fast-growing wildfire has sparked in the Klamath National Forest in Northern California.</p> <p>Farther south, record highs were tied in Redding and Sacramento, California, on Saturday at 110 degrees and 106 degrees, respectively.</p> <p>Hot temperatures are expected to continue in the region on Sunday.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/22 Ohio largest school district votes to strike</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/22/us/ohio-school-district-strike/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/22/us/ohio-school-district-strike/index.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>(CNN)Teachers at Ohio's largest school district voted to go on strike Sunday, just days before school is scheduled to start, according to the teachers' union.</p> <p>The Columbus Education Association union -- which represents over 4,000 teachers, nurses and other education professionals at the Columbus City Schools district -- said it will be its first strike in decades.</p> <p>"94% of Columbus Education Association (CEA) members voted to reject the (school) Board's last, best and final offer and go on strike for the first time since 1975," the union said in a statement on <a href="#">Twitter</a>. "CEA is committed to bargaining for the safe and welcoming, properly maintained, and fully-resourced public schools Columbus students deserve."</p> <p>The union said the disagreement is over learning conditions, including class sizes and functional heating and air conditioning in classrooms, according to Columbus Education Association's <a href="#">notice of intent to strike</a>.</p> <p>The Columbus Board of Education called the outcome of the vote "disappointing."</p> <p>"Tonight's vote by the Columbus Education Association (CEA) is incredibly disappointing. We are saddened by the unfortunate situation our families, our community and, most importantly, our children now face," a <a href="#">statement</a> from the board said.</p> <p>Columbus City Schools serves 47,000 students, according to the district.</p> <p>Despite the strike, the school year is still scheduled to begin Wednesday, but classes will be online and led by substitutes, according to school district's website.</p>

	<p>The district says its own administrators may also teach online classes while the strike continues. But since teachers make up most of the district's coaching staff, sports activities may be rescheduled or canceled, according to the website.</p> <p>The strike at Columbus City Schools isn't the only one happening this week.</p> <p>Just a day before the vote in Ohio, a union representing about 2,000 <a href="#">School District of Philadelphia</a> employees voted to authorize a strike -- just over one week before school is set to start.</p> <p>The union in Philadelphia, 32BJ SEIU, is asking for higher wages and adequate training programs.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 DEA: fentanyl prevention, awareness day</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://katu.com/news/nation-world/dea-recognizes-aug-21-as-national-fentanyl-prevention-and-awareness-day-opioids-drugs-oxycodone-addiction">https://katu.com/news/nation-world/dea-recognizes-aug-21-as-national-fentanyl-prevention-and-awareness-day-opioids-drugs-oxycodone-addiction</a>
GIST	<p>TULSA, Okla. (KTUL) — In 2021, around 107,000 people in the U.S. died of <a href="#">drug overdoses/poisonings</a>, according to the Center for Disease Control.</p> <p>Of those deaths, 67% involved synthetic <a href="#">opioids like fentanyl</a>.</p> <p>The Drug Enforcement Agency said it is taking Sunday, Aug. 21 to amplify nationwide efforts to increase awareness of the highly addictive and dangerous drugs containing fentanyl that continue to drive the opioid epidemic.</p> <p>“Fentanyl is the single deadliest drug threat our nation has ever encountered,” said DEA Administrator Anne Milgram. “From large cities to rural America, no community is safe from the presence of fentanyl. DEA is proud to work with families who have been affected by fentanyl poisonings to spread the word and to save lives.”</p> <p>Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid approximately 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine, according to the DEA. It's cheap, widely available, highly addictive and only takes two milligrams to be considered a lethal dose, the DEA said.</p> <p>DEA has created a special exhibit for its museum, The Faces of Fentanyl, to commemorate the lives lost from fentanyl poisoning. If you would like to submit a photo of a loved one lost to fentanyl, submit their name and photo to <a href="mailto:fentanylawareness@dea.gov">fentanylawareness@dea.gov</a>, or post a photo and their name to social media using the hashtag #NationalFentanylAwarenessDay.</p> <p>For more information on the dangers of fentanyl, visit <a href="http://www.DEA.gov/fentanylawareness">www.DEA.gov/fentanylawareness</a></p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Russia's 'most hidden crime' in Ukraine war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-08-21/russias-most-hidden-crime-in-ukraine-war-rape">https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-08-21/russias-most-hidden-crime-in-ukraine-war-rape</a>
GIST	<p>MAKARIV, Ukraine — The Russian soldier taunted her: Your friend, he sneered, is lying on the floor, raped and naked and dead.</p> <p>S., a Ukrainian writer and government worker in her early 60s, froze at his words. Her neighbor Tetiana, a bold, dark-haired 37-year-old widow, had quickly attracted the attention of Russian soldiers who, within days of the <a href="#">Feb. 24 invasion</a>, <a href="#">captured and occupied</a> the small town of Makariv, about 30 miles west of <a href="#">the capital, Kyiv</a>.</p> <p>“She would defy them,” said S., still shaken and sorrowful as she described the <a href="#">harrowing events</a> of five months earlier, before late-winter chill gave way to spring, then high summer. “She would tell them: ‘I’m not afraid of you.’”</p>



Weeks would pass before the outside world [learned of the horrors](#) that occurred in streets and basements and back gardens of these once-tranquil suburbs and satellite towns, which were occupied for roughly a month before Russian forces in early April broke off a [failed bid to seize the capital](#).

Townpeople who were unable or unwilling to flee endured the first wave of what Western governments and Ukrainian officials would later describe as a systematic campaign of atrocities by Russian forces against civilians: torture, execution-style killings, starvation.

And rape.

Little by little, month by month, investigators have laid the groundwork for what are now more than 25,000 active cases of [suspected war crimes](#), covering a wide variety of offenses.

Investigators compile narratives from witness testimony, from forensic examinations of mutilated corpses that are still regularly turning up — outside Kyiv, one body was recently found stuffed beneath a manhole cover — from intercepted communications by Russian soldiers describing their own acts, or from surveillance cameras that before the war monitored traffic and deterred shoplifters.

As the war nears the six-month mark, however, cases involving sexual assault are proving particularly resistant to documentation.

The prosecutor general's office said last week there are "several dozen" criminal proceedings underway involving sexual violence committed by Russian military personnel. But police, prosecutors and counselors say the true number is likely far larger, in part because of reluctance to report such attacks.

"Sexual violence in this war is the most hidden crime," Ukrainian civil-society activist Natalia Karbowska told the U.N. Security Council in June.

A complex tangle of reasons underpins that silence. Some, like Tetiana, did not live to tell their stories. Some fled the country, joining an enormous exodus, and are not in contact with Ukrainian authorities. Others feel ashamed, clinging to the belief that they could somehow have prevented what befell them. Or a sexual attack might have taken place in the context of separate, overwhelming wartime loss: a home destroyed, a loved one killed.

Still others look to the near-industrial-scale atrocities occurring elsewhere — daily bombardment of civilian areas; the deaths of dozens of Ukrainian POWs last month in what evidence suggests was a deliberate mass execution by Russian forces; reports of torture, detention and abductions in currently occupied areas — and convince themselves that they ought to quietly put their private agonies behind them.

"They think others suffered more," said Nadiia Volchenska, a 32-year-old Kyiv psychologist who co-founded a network that connects sexual assault victims with counselors. She said people who had been raped or sexually abused in the course of this conflict — most are women and girls, but many are men and boys — are often reluctant to speak even in confidence with a therapist, let alone go to police or other investigators and provide a detailed account.

"Quite often, after making a first contact with us," she said, "people will simply vanish."

Rape as a weapon is as old as war itself. The objective, say those who deal with such cases, is to humiliate and degrade, to break the spirit of defenders, to shatter families and communities, to instill a sense of hopelessness and despair. It often leaves wreckage too profound to repair.

"Of course it is not about sexual gratification," said Natalya Zaretska, a military psychologist by training who is currently a volunteer in the Territorial Defense Forces, working with people in the formerly occupied territories in the Kyiv oblast, or province. "Rape is one instrument that is used to try to achieve this goal of subjugation."

Ukrainian officials believe a Russian campaign of terrorism against civilians was sanctioned at the highest levels, rather than the work of rogue troops. The Kremlin has derided well-documented atrocities in occupied areas as a fabrication, so for Ukraine, compiling proof and moving ahead with prosecutions is considered vital, even if such a reckoning takes many years.

“Evil must be punished, or it will spread,” said Andriy Nebytov, the police chief for the Kyiv region.

Authorities are circumspect about the specifics of sexual assault cases under investigation, but in a statement in response to written questions from the Los Angeles Times, the prosecutor general’s office cited a few representative examples.

In the town of Chernihiv, north of the capital, a Russian unit commander used “physical and psychological violence” against a 16-year-old girl, threatening to kill family members if she resisted his sexual advances, or to hand her over to others to be gang-raped instead. In Brovary, east of Kyiv, a serviceman has been indicted in absentia for repeatedly raping the wife of a slain civilian. In another case in that same district, soldiers singled out one woman for assault, herding others into a locked basement. Another, Ukrainian officials say, was raped with her young child nearby.

In carefully couched language, the prosecutor’s office cited obstacles faced by investigators, including the need to protect the privacy of minors and to avoid re-traumatizing survivors. But sheer stigma was described as the overriding factor.

“Women who have been raped,” the statement said, “do not want to spread such information about themselves.”

Those who lived under Russian occupation earlier in the war describe a nauseating sense of constant fear.

S., who did not want even her full first name used because some of the troops who occupied Makariv back in March are still in Ukraine, is working with the authorities to try to identify those involved in Tetiana’s assault and death. Some of the occupiers addressed one another by names or nicknames, aiding in this process.

On her smartphone, S. showed photos of individual soldiers sent to her by prosecutors, who for months have tracked the unit’s activities and obtained images of the suspects from social media and elsewhere. She recognized several, including ones who came regularly to her house and to Tetiana’s simple brick home next door to loot and carouse and threaten. She particularly feared one, a Chechen, whose erratic behavior made her think he was on drugs.

When the Russians first arrived, S. was caring for her 90-year-old mother, who was in fragile health and adamantly refused to leave. But in the ensuing weeks, the soldiers’ violence and volatility persuaded her that they must seize any chance to escape.

A neighbor man was shot by soldiers, eventually dying of his wounds, and S. was told his wife had been sexually assaulted. (That woman declined to speak with journalists about what had happened.) One day, a young soldier came to S.’s own house and tried to get her to go upstairs with him. Fearing he intended to rape her, she tried to dissuade him by noting the 30-year disparity in their ages.

In the midst of this, other soldiers came to the house, telling the would-be assailant he was needed elsewhere, and he eventually left with them. S. felt a rush of terrified relief.

On the day that she, her mother, Tetiana and a home health aide had been promised a ride to safety with a neighbor, her friend was nowhere to be found. Troops again burst into S.’s house, with one of them behaving bizarrely and demanding a bandage for an injury. After downing a shot of vodka, he blurted out news of her friend’s fate.



	<p>Soldiers refused to let her see Tetiana's body, S. said. Eventually, a serviceman she believed to be an ethnic Buryat from Siberia offered to let her speak to someone he said knew the full story. That soldier told S. that Tetiana had been raped by several others, and that the Chechen was the one to stab and kill her. Ordered to bury the naked corpse, the soldier told S. they first wrapped the body in a blanket.</p> <p>"I felt shame that she is dead and I am still alive," she said months later on a heat-heavy summer afternoon, brewing tea for visitors and keeping an eye on her mother dozing in an armchair nearby. "I have that guilt."</p> <p>Rape counselors say that with many instances of assault having taken place early in the war, some of those people may be recovering their equilibrium enough to talk about what happened to them.</p> <p>"Sometimes we see this around six months later, the beginning of a willingness to open up," said Volchenska, the Kyiv therapist. "But now we expect a wave of similar cases from Kherson" — a southern city seized by Russia early in the invasion, which Ukrainian forces hope to retake.</p> <p>"The problem is that you need to feel safe to talk," she said. "And really nowhere in the country is safe."</p> <p>In Makariv, S. still thinks often of Tetiana — her humor, her quirks, her determination. Every day, she looks out on the now-empty house her friend once lived in, trying to picture her vibrant and alive. She remembers Tetiana telling her about a dream she'd had, during the frightening days of occupation.</p> <p>"In it, she was on the cloud, flying," S. said. "It was so peaceful. It was so good."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/22 Iran: US delaying nuclear deal revival</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-says-us-procrastinating-nuclear-talks-2022-08-22/">https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-says-us-procrastinating-nuclear-talks-2022-08-22/</a>
GIST	<p>DUBAI, Aug 22 (Reuters) - Iran accused the United States on Monday of "procrastinating" in indirect talks aimed at reinstating Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal, and said a prisoner swap with Washington was not linked to the negotiations.</p> <p>After 16 months of fitful, indirect U.S.-Iranian talks, with European Union officials shuttling between the sides, a senior EU official said on Aug. 8 it had laid down a "final" offer and expected a response within a "very, very few weeks."</p> <p>Iran last week responded to the EU's text with "additional views and considerations", while calling on Washington to show flexibility to resolve three remaining issues. The United States last week said it was studying Iran's response.</p> <p>"The Americans are procrastinating and there is inaction from the European sides...America and Europe need an agreement more than Iran," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani told a news conference.</p> <p>Kanaani said Tehran wanted a sustainable deal that would preserve Tehran's legitimate rights".</p> <p>"Until we agree on all issues, we cannot say that we have reached a complete agreement," he said.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the United States has repeatedly called on Tehran to release several Iranian-Americans held in Iran on security charges. Iran has demanded several Iranians detained on charges linked to U.S. sanctions to be freed.</p> <p>"We emphasize that the exchange of prisoners with Washington is a separate issue and it has nothing to do with the process of negotiations to revive the 2015 pact," Kanaani said, adding that Tehran was ready to swap prisoners.</p>

	<p>In 2018, then-President Donald Trump reneged on the deal reached before he took office, calling it too soft on Iran, and reimposed harsh U.S. sanctions, prompting Tehran to begin breaching the pact's nuclear curbs.</p> <p>"We seek a good agreement which would guarantee Iran's national interests and would be long-lasting...We won't be bitten twice," Kanaani said.</p> <p>The 2015 agreement appeared on the verge of revival in March after 11 months of indirect talks between Tehran and U.S. President Joe Biden's administration in Vienna.</p> <p>But talks broke down over obstacles such as Tehran's demand that Washington provide guarantees that no U.S. president would abandon the deal as Trump did.</p> <p>However, President Joe Biden cannot provide such ironclad assurances because the deal is a political understanding rather than a legally binding treaty.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/22 Philippines schools after 2yrs lockdowns</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-education-philippines-manila-8c0f9aed6eae078d853a2c48e5da3687">https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-education-philippines-manila-8c0f9aed6eae078d853a2c48e5da3687</a>
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Millions of students wearing face masks streamed back to primary and secondary schools across the Philippines on Monday for their first in-person classes after two years of coronavirus lockdowns that are feared to have worsened alarming illiteracy rates among children.</p> <p>Officials grappled with daunting problems, including classroom shortages, lingering COVID-19 fears, an approaching storm and quake-damaged school buildings in the country's north, to welcome back nearly 28 million students who enrolled for the school year.</p> <p>In a grade school in San Juan city in the capital region, teachers checked the temperatures of students and sprayed alcohol on their hands before letting them into classrooms.</p> <p>Renaline Pemapelis, 27, excitedly gave last-minute instructions to her son, who was going to school for the first time. "I have mixed feelings, worried and excited," she told The Associated Press.</p> <p>Only about 24,000 of the nation's public schools, or about 46%, were able to begin in-person classes five times a week starting Monday, while the rest will resort to a mix of in-person and online classes until Nov. 2, when all public and private schools are required to bring all students back to classrooms, education officials said.</p> <p>But about 1,000 schools will be unable to shift entirely to face-to-face classes during the transition period for various reasons, including damage to school building wrought by a powerful earthquake last month in the north, officials said.</p> <p>The Department of Education said some schools will have to split classes into up to three shifts a day due to classroom shortages, a longstanding problem, and to avoid overcrowding that could turn schools into new centers of coronavirus outbreaks.</p> <p>"We always say that our goal is a maximum of two shifts only but there will be areas that would have to resort to three shifts because they're really overcrowded," Education Department spokesperson Michael Poa said on Friday. Despite many concerns, education officials gave assurances that it's "all-systems go" for Monday's resumption of classes, he said.</p> <p>Sen. Joel Villanueva, however, said such assurances have to be matched by real improvements on the ground.</p>

“The era of missing classrooms, sharing tables and chairs and holding classes under the shade of trees must no longer happen,” said Villanueva, who filed two bills calling for additional grocery, transportation and medical allowances for public school teachers.

Among the worst-hit by the pandemic in Southeast Asia, the Philippines under then-President Rodrigo Duterte enforced one of the world’s longest coronavirus lockdowns and school closures. Duterte, whose six-year term ended June 30, rejected calls for a resumption of in-person classes due to fears it might ignite new outbreaks.

The prolonged school closures sparked fears that literacy rates among Filipino children — already at alarming levels before the pandemic — could worsen.

A World Bank study last year showed that about nine out of 10 children in the Philippines were suffering from “learning poverty,” or the inability of children by age 10 to read and understand a simple story.

“Prolonged school closures, poor health risk mitigation, and household-income shocks had the biggest impact on learning poverty, resulting in many children in the Philippines failing to read and understand a simple text by age 10,” UNICEF Philippines said in a statement.

“Vulnerable children such as children with disabilities, children living in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, and children living in disaster and conflict zones fare far worse,” the U.N. agency for children said.

Poa said 325 temporary learning spaces were being constructed in northern Abra province and outlying regions to replace school buildings battered by a July 27 quake.

Education officials also scrambled to help more than 28,000 students look for new schools after at least 425 private schools closed permanently following the pandemic’s arrival in 2020, mainly due to financial losses. About 10,000 of the students have been enrolled in public schools, Poa said.

Poverty has also been a key hindrance to education. Crowds mobbed the Department of Social Welfare and Development offices on Saturday to claim cash aid for indigent students, resulting in the injury of at least 26 people who were pinned in entrance gates.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/22 China fights brush fires; power rationing</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/china-asia-droughts-economy-d4ba5cbcd6c35bc43382bfc26351b279">https://apnews.com/article/china-asia-droughts-economy-d4ba5cbcd6c35bc43382bfc26351b279</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — Brush fires have forced the evacuation of more than 1,500 people in southwest China and power rationing for factories has reportedly been extended as weeks of record heat and drought batter the region.</p> <p>Some shopping malls in the megacity of Chongqing have been ordered closed for most of the day to reduce electricity demand, state broadcaster CCTV said, limiting opening hours to 4 to 9 p.m.</p> <p>The <a href="#">drought and heat have wilted crops</a> and caused rivers including the <a href="#">giant Yangtze to shrink</a>, disrupting cargo traffic and reducing power supply from hydroelectric dams at a time of soaring demand for air conditioning. State media say the government will <a href="#">try to protect the autumn grain harvest</a>, which is 75% of China’s annual total, by shooting chemicals into clouds to try to generate rain.</p> <p>The disruption adds to challenges for the ruling Communist Party, which is trying to <a href="#">shore up sagging economic growth</a> before a meeting this fall at which President Xi Jinping is expected to be given a third five-year term as party leader.</p>

There was no public announcement of the extension of power rationing in Sichuan province into a second week, but it was detailed in a company statement and a government notice to companies that was reported by Chinese news outlets.

The “tense situation” of power supplies in Sichuan province “has further intensified,” Tencent News said Monday in a report that included a photo of the government notice.

LIER Chemical Co. said in an announcement through the stock exchange in the southern city of Shenzhen that its facilities in the cities of Jinyang and Guang’an in Sichuan received an order extending power rationing through Thursday.

Factories in Sichuan that make processor chips, solar panels, auto components and other industrial goods were required to shut down or reduce activity last week to conserve power for homes as air conditioning demand surged in temperatures as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit). Air conditioning, elevators and lights were shut off in offices and shopping malls.

In Shanghai, a factory and shipping hub on China’s east coast, Tesla Ltd. and a major state-owned automaker suspended production last week due to disruption in supplies of components from Sichuan, the Shanghai city government said.

Sichuan, with 94 million people, is especially hard-hit because it gets 80% of its power from hydroelectric dams. Other provinces rely more on coal-fired power, which isn’t affected.

Economists say if Sichuan reopens relatively soon, the national impact should be limited because the province accounts for only 4% of China’s industrial output.

The Chinese government says this summer is China’s hottest and driest since it began keeping temperature and rainfall records in 1961. Temperatures have exceeded 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) for the past week and longer.

Brush fires in outlying areas of Chongqing, which borders Sichuan, are the latest scourge resulting from the heat and drought.

More than 1,500 residents had been moved to shelters, while around 5,000 civilian and military personnel had been mobilized to put out the blazes, the official Xinhua News Agency said Monday.

Helicopters have been sent to drop water on the fires, supporting crews on the ground who have in the past been left to their own resources.

In 2019, a wildfire in the mountains of Sichuan province killed 30 firefighters and volunteers.

No deaths have yet been reported as a result of the heat wave, Xinhua said, although that could not be independently verified.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/22 Russia shells area near nuclear plant</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-fires-eac13f4bb47663c9769696029ecc257d">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-fires-eac13f4bb47663c9769696029ecc257d</a>
GIST	<p>NIKOPOL, Ukraine (AP) — Only hours after the latest international pleas to spare the area around Ukraine’s main nuclear plant from attacks, there were new claims of Russian shelling close to the Zaporizhzhya facilities early Monday.</p> <p>Nikopol, on the opposite bank of the Dnieper River and about 10 kilometers (6 miles) downstream from the plant, came under fire three times during the night from rockets and mortars, hitting houses, a kindergarten, the bus station and stores, regional governor Valentyn Reznichenko said. Ukraine media reported that four people were wounded.</p>

Reports of sustained shelling around Europe's largest nuclear power plant further highlighted the dangers of a war that will hit the half-year mark on Wednesday.

After U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres again urged caution during a visit to Ukraine last week, U.S. President Joe Biden further discussed the issue with the leaders of France, Germany and Britain on Sunday.

The four leaders stressed the need to avoid military operations in the region to prevent the possibility of a potentially devastating nuclear accident and called for the U.N.'s atomic energy agency to be allowed to visit the facilities as soon as possible.

Yet, nothing seemed certain in a war that has spread fear and unease far beyond the frontlines in eastern and southern Ukraine and also into the Russia-annexed Crimea peninsula and as far as Moscow, where on Saturday night a car blast killed the daughter of an influential Russian political theorist often referred to as "Putin's brain."

On Monday Russian authorities were looking for further clues who could be behind the incident, after authorities said preliminary information indicated 29-year-old TV commentator Daria Dugina was killed by an explosive planted in the SUV she was driving.

A former Russian opposition lawmaker, Ilya Ponomarev, said an unknown Russian group, the National Republican Army, claimed responsibility for the bombing. The AP could not verify the existence of the group. Ponomarev, who left Russia after voting against its annexation of Crimea in 2014, made the statement to Ukrainian TV.

Ukraine officials have denied involvement.

In Crimea, anxiety has spread further following a spate of fires and explosions at Russian facilities over the past two weeks. The governor of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhaev, ordered that signs showing the location of bomb shelters be placed in the city that had long seemed untouchable.

Monday's statement follows a series of drone incursions into the Crimean city that is home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet. A drone exploded at the fleet's headquarters on July 31 and another was shot down over the HQ last week. Authorities also say air-defense systems have shot down other drones. Razvozhaev said on Telegram that the city is well protected but "it is better to know where the shelters are."

Russian President Vladimir Putin did not mention Russia's military operation in Ukraine during a speech marking National Flag Day on Monday, but echoed some of the justifications cited for sending in troops.

"We are firm in pursuing in the international arena only those policies that meet the fundamental interests of the motherland," Putin said. He maintains Russia sent troops into Ukraine as effectively a protective measure against the encroaching West.

"The desire to live according to one's will, to choose one's own path and follow it, has become part of the genetic code of our people," he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Monkeypox virus can linger on surfaces</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.the-sun.com/health/6040199/monkeypox-virus-can-linger-on-surfaces/">https://www.the-sun.com/health/6040199/monkeypox-virus-can-linger-on-surfaces/</a>
GIST	<b>MONKEYPOX virus can stick stubbornly to surfaces touched by an infected person, a study has found.</b>  The potentially deadly disease can cling to household items in a patient's home even after extensive cleaning - but there is no evidence you could pick up the pox yourself after touching infected objects.

Most of the samples in the experiment - 21 out of 30 - tested positive for the virus after coming into contact with infected people, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)).

The experiment investigated a home in [Utah](#) where two monkeypox patients lived alongside other uninfected people.

Investigators swabbed 30 household items from nine different areas of the house, while both patients were still symptomatic and therefore actively spreading their infection.

The scientists tested two types of object - labelling soft surfaces which could soak up liquid like clothing or furniture "porous", and hard surfaces like handles and switches "non-porous".

Both types of object were discovered to be carrying monkeypox even after cleaning and disinfectant.

All three "porous" surfaces tested positive, while 17 of the 25 "non-porous" items had traces of the [virus](#).

Only one item - oven knobs - was negative and the rest of the samples were inconclusive.

But despite evidence of the monkeypox on these household objects, not a single sample was positive for virus culture - meaning the disease wasn't "live" and couldn't infect other people.

None of the other members of the household picked up the [disease](#), so scientists are unsure how much of a risk this discovery poses to others sharing a space with monkeypox patients.

The virus is mainly spread by physical contact, meaning you are most likely to catch monkeypox if you directly touch another person.

Although the evidence of the [bug](#) sticking to household objects sounds unsettling, the discovery might not pose a threat if the virus doesn't survive long enough on these surfaces to transmit to other people.

The CDC report read: "Monkeypox virus DNA was detected from many objects and surfaces sampled indicating that some level of contamination occurred in the household environment.

"The inability to detect viable virus suggests that virus viability might have decayed over time or through chemical or environmental inactivation."

It added: "Their cleaning and disinfection practices during this period might have limited the level of contamination within the household."

Hopefully the scientific research will help to control the spread of monkeypox across the world.

In the US there are 13,517 cases, with [California](#) and [New York](#) having the most.

At present there are around 20 cases of the bug being picked up each day in the UK, down from 35 a week ago.

The latest data from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) states that there are 3,081 confirmed cases in the UK - with a further 114 highly probable infections.

Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are at higher risk of becoming infected with monkeypox.

Dr William Welfare, Incident Director at UKHSA, said: "While the most recent data suggests the growth of the outbreak has slowed, we continue to see new cases every day.



	<p>"While anyone can get monkeypox, the majority of monkeypox cases in the UK continue to be in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, with the infection being passed on mainly through close contact in interconnected sexual networks.</p> <p>"Please continue to be aware of symptoms, including rashes and blisters, particularly if you have recently had a new sexual partner."</p> <p>While there is a <a href="#">vaccine protecting against monkeypox</a>, a <a href="#">vaccine drive</a> to jab those most susceptible to the illnesses has been slowed due to <a href="#">shortages</a>.</p> <p>The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the growing cases a public health emergency, with <a href="#">jabs</a> being rolled out to those most at risk.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 New York first monkeypox case in a child</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/york-reports-1st-case-monkeypox-child/story?id=88644366">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/york-reports-1st-case-monkeypox-child/story?id=88644366</a>
GIST	<p>The New York State Department of Health reported its first known case of monkeypox in a child in New York.</p> <p>According to the new <a href="#">data</a>, one child under the age of 18 has tested positive for monkeypox. The age of the child or the county where the case was reported was not specified in the report. The case was not reported in New York City.</p> <p>According to the latest data reported by the NYC Department of Health on Thursday, no cases of monkeypox in children have been found in the city.</p> <p>There are a total of 2,798 confirmed monkeypox cases in New York as of Friday, according to the NYSDOH. Of those, 2,596 are in New York City.</p> <p>New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and other health officials declared monkeypox to be the "epicenter of the outbreak" in July. Hochul declared a State Disaster Emergency executive order in response to the growing outbreak.</p> <p>"My team and I are working around the clock to secure more vaccines, expand testing capacity and responsibly educate the public on how to stay safe during this outbreak," Hochul said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Polio cases reveal rare risk of oral vaccine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/polio-us-uk-israel-reveals-rare-risk-oral-88659045">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/polio-us-uk-israel-reveals-rare-risk-oral-88659045</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON -- For years, global health officials have used billions of drops of an oral vaccine in a remarkably effective campaign aimed at wiping out polio in its last remaining strongholds — typically, poor, politically unstable corners of the world.</p> <p>Now, in a surprising twist in the decades-long effort to eradicate the virus, authorities in Jerusalem, New York and London have discovered evidence that polio is spreading there.</p> <p>The original source of the virus? The oral vaccine itself.</p> <p>Scientists have long known about this extremely rare phenomenon. That is why some countries have switched to other polio vaccines. But these incidental infections from the oral formula are becoming more glaring as the world inches closer to eradication of the disease and the number of polio cases caused by the wild, or naturally circulating, virus plummets.</p>

Since 2017, there have been 396 cases of polio caused by the wild virus, versus more than 2,600 linked to the oral vaccine, according to figures from the World Health Organization and its partners.

“We are basically replacing the wild virus with the virus in the vaccine, which is now leading to new outbreaks,” said Scott Barrett, a Columbia University professor who has studied polio eradication. “I would assume that countries like the U.K. and the U.S. will be able to stop transmission quite quickly, but we also thought that about monkeypox.”

The latest incidents represent the first time in several years that vaccine-connected polio virus has turned up in rich countries.

Earlier this year, officials in Israel detected polio in an unvaccinated 3-year-old, who suffered paralysis. Several other children, nearly all of them unvaccinated, were found to have the virus but no symptoms.

In June, British authorities reported finding evidence in sewage that the virus was spreading, though no infections in people were identified. Last week, the government said all children in London ages 1 to 9 would be offered a booster shot.

In the U.S., an unvaccinated young adult suffered paralysis in his legs after being infected with polio, New York officials revealed last month. The virus has also shown up in New York sewers, suggesting it is spreading. But officials said they are not planning a booster campaign because they believe the state's high vaccination rate should offer enough protection.

Genetic analyses showed that the viruses in the three countries were all “vaccine-derived,” meaning that they were mutated versions of a virus that originated in the oral vaccine.

The oral vaccine at issue has been used since 1988 because it is cheap, easy to administer — two drops are put directly into children's mouths — and better at protecting entire populations where polio is spreading. It contains a weakened form of the live virus.

But it can also cause polio in about two to four children per 2 million doses. (Four doses are required to be fully immunized.) In extremely rare cases, the weakened virus can also sometimes mutate into a more dangerous form and spark outbreaks, especially in places with poor sanitation and low vaccination levels.

These outbreaks typically begin when people who are vaccinated shed live virus from the vaccine in their feces. From there, the virus can spread within the community and, over time, turn into a form that can paralyze people and start new epidemics.

Many countries that eliminated polio switched to injectable vaccines containing a killed virus decades ago to avoid such risks; the Nordic countries and the Netherlands never used the oral vaccine. The ultimate goal is to move the entire world to the shots once wild polio is eradicated, but some scientists argue that the switch should happen sooner.

“We probably could never have gotten on top of polio in the developing world without the (oral polio vaccine), but this is the price we’re now paying,” said Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. “The only way we are going to eliminate polio is to eliminate the use of the oral vaccine.”

Aidan O’Leary, director of WHO's polio department, described the discovery of polio spreading in London and New York as “a major surprise,” saying that officials have been focused on eradicating the disease in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where health workers have been killed for immunizing children and where conflict has made access to some areas impossible.

Still, O’Leary said he is confident Israel, Britain and the U.S. will shut down their newly identified outbreaks quickly.

The oral vaccine is credited with dramatically reducing the number of children paralyzed by polio. When the global eradication effort began in 1988, there were about 350,000 cases of wild polio a year. So far this year, there have been 19 cases of wild polio, all in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Mozambique.

In 2020, the number of polio cases linked to the vaccine hit a peak of more than 1,100 spread out across dozens of countries. It has since declined to around 200 this year so far.

Last year, WHO and partners also began using a newer oral polio vaccine, which contains a live but weakened virus that scientists believe is less likely to mutate into a dangerous form. But supplies are limited.

To stop polio in Britain, the U.S. and Israel, what is needed is more vaccination, experts say. That is something Columbia University's Barrett worries could be challenging in the COVID-19 era.

“What’s different now is a reduction in trust of authorities and the political polarization in countries like the U.S. and the U.K.,” Barrett said. “The presumption that we can quickly get vaccination numbers up quickly may be more challenging now.”

Oyewale Tomori, a virologist who helped direct Nigeria’s effort to eliminate polio, said that in the past, he and colleagues balked at describing outbreaks as “vaccine-derived,” wary it would make people fearful of the vaccine.

“All we can do is explain how the vaccine works and hope that people understand that immunization is the best protection, but it’s complicated,” Tomori said. “In hindsight, maybe it would have been better not to use this vaccine, but at that time, nobody knew it would turn out like this.”

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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Fires outpace effort to fill inmate crews</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/western-fires-outpace-california-effort-fill-inmate-crews-88661119">https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/western-fires-outpace-california-effort-fill-inmate-crews-88661119</a>
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- As wildfires rage across California each year, exhausted firefighters call for reinforcements from wherever they can get them — even as far as Australia.</p> <p>Yet one homegrown resource is rarely used: thousands of experienced firefighters who earned their chops in prison. Two state programs designed to get more former inmate firefighters hired professionally have barely made a dent, according to an Associated Press review, with one \$30 million effort netting jobs for just over 100 firefighters, little more than one-third of the inmates enrolled.</p> <p>Clad in distinctive orange uniforms, inmate crews protect multimillion-dollar homes for a few dollars a day by cutting brush and trees with chainsaws and scraping the earth to create barriers they hope will stop flames.</p> <p>Once freed from prison, however, the former inmates have trouble getting hired professionally because of their criminal records, despite a first-in-the-nation, 18-month-old law designed to ease their way and a 4-year-old training program that cost taxpayers at least \$180,000 per graduate.</p> <p>“It’s absolutely an untapped pool of talent,” said Genevieve Rimer, who works with former inmates trying to clear their records. “Thousands of people are coming back from California’s fire camps annually. They have already been trained. They have a desire to go and put their lives on the line in order to ensure public safety.”</p> <p>California is hardly alone in needing seasoned smoke eaters, but the nation's most populous state faces different challenges than other more sparsely settled Western regions. A wildfire that nearly leveled the Sierra Nevada foothills town of Paradise nearly four years ago, for instance, was the nation’s deadliest wildfire in nearly a century, killing 85 people.</p>

The U.S. Forest Service is short about 1,200 firefighters, 500 of them in California, and the Interior Department is down about 450 firefighters, 150 of them in California, said two of the state's top elected officials, U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, in a recent letter to Biden administration officials.

Other Western states are grappling with the issue. Nevada is considering a program like Arizona's "Phoenix Crew," which started in 2017 and provides mostly former inmate firefighters a pipeline to firefighting jobs.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the California legislation in 2020, allowing former inmates to seek to withdraw guilty pleas or overturn convictions. A judge can then dismiss the charges. Former inmates convicted of murder, kidnapping, arson, escape and sex offenses are excluded.

Since the law took effect, the nonprofit Forestry & Fire Recruitment Program, started by two former inmate firefighters, has worked with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles to help former inmates clear their records and get hired.

Yet they have only been able to file 34 petitions, and just 12 had records expunged during what the program warns "can be a long and drawn out process."

Ashleigh Dennis is one of at least three attorneys filing expungement petitions through the Oakland-based advocacy group Root & Rebound. She has similarly been able to file just 23 requests, with 14 granted.

Among other hurdles, applicants must show a judge evidence they have been rehabilitated, and the expungement only applies to crimes they were incarcerated for while working in firefighting crews. Many people have unrelated convictions that must be separately expunged.

It's been a learning curve to educate judges about the law and get the corrections department to speed up certifying to the court that inmates have served as firefighters, said Dennis and one of her clients, Phi Le. He petitioned the court in October and his record was expunged in January.

Da'Ton Harris Jr.'s record was finally cleared in August, about 18 months after starting the process.

"I'm out here, a public servant, risking my life every day to try and better my community," said Harris. "I don't think it was a smooth transaction at all."

Despite his record, Harris obtained firefighting jobs with the U.S. Forest Service, the state's firefighting agency Cal Fire, and the Forestry & Fire Recruitment Program.

But like Le, his advancement was limited because his criminal record made him ineligible for an Emergency Medical Technician certification, an obstacle that disappeared with the expungement. Outside of temporary federal and state firefighting agency jobs, most fire departments require applicants to be licensed EMTs — a certification the state bans certain felons from obtaining because the job comes with access to narcotics and sharp objects.

Rimer, the Forestry & Fire Recruitment Program's director of supportive services, said California should automatically expunge records of eligible former inmates, much as it does for those convicted of antiquated marijuana crimes. And it should include their entire criminal record, she said.

"I think it spearheaded opportunity for people, but I don't think it's good enough," she said of the expungement law.

The law's author, Assembly Majority Leader Eloise Reyes, a Democrat from San Bernardino, has been struggling ever since to learn how many former inmates it has helped. She said many former inmates have contacted her office to praise "the life-changing impact of the legislation."

The corrections department informs eligible inmates about the law but doesn't track expungements, said department spokeswoman Tessa Outhyse. Cal Fire, the court system and the state Department of Justice also couldn't say how many have had their records expunged.

In another effort, California in 2018 created a training program to help former inmates get hired professionally.

The 18-month program is run by Cal Fire, the California Conservation Corps, the state corrections department and the nonprofit Anti-Recidivism Coalition at the Ventura Training Center northwest of Los Angeles. Conservation corps members also are eligible. Former inmates convicted of arson or sex offenses are excluded.

Participants spend six months on life skills and firefighter training and the next year fighting or preventing fires and doing other community service, for which they are paid \$1,905 a month. The center has four fire crews with 60 participants.

In four years the program has cost over \$29.5 million but has just 106 graduates.

Nearly all found a professional job: 98 are with Cal Fire and three are with other agencies including the Orange County Fire Authority and the U.S. Forest Service, according to corrections officials. Cal Fire provided slightly different figures.

But they're the fortunate ones among the 277 who have participated since the program's inception. Another 111 participants, or 40%, left before completing the program, said Outhyse.

Climate change is making wildfires more frequent and destructive, so the shortage comes at a time when demand for wildfire crews is going up.

And the state is turning more to professional wildland firefighters, largely because inmate crews are less available after voters shortened criminal sentences and officials released thousands of lower-level inmates early to prevent coronavirus infections.

This August about 1,670 inmates are in fire camps, including staff like cooks and laundry workers, down about 40% from August 2019. The corrections department was budgeted for 152 crews this year, but fielded just 51, each with about 15-18 firefighters.

With fewer inmate crews, California is turning more to other agencies. The conservation corps is responsible for filling 30 crews, Cal Fire 26 and the California National Guard 14.

The state also is creating what officials called the first all-hazards fire engine strike team operated by a state National Guard. The fire engines can respond both to wildfires and urban blazes.

"We've recognized for a few years now that due to early release, due to COVID, a number of other reasons, we have to do something," said Battalion Chief Issac Sanchez, a Cal Fire spokesman.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Russia mercenaries project Kremlin power</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-wagner-group-mercenaries-mali-west-africa-11661099199?mod=hp_lead_pos8">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-wagner-group-mercenaries-mali-west-africa-11661099199?mod=hp_lead_pos8</a>
GIST	<p>MALI-MAURITANIA BORDER—The leaders of Mali's junta gathered at Bamako airport earlier this month to hail the latest delivery from their new benefactor: the Kremlin.</p> <p>On the northern end of the airstrip stood a line of attack aircraft, including Russian jet fighters and helicopter gunships to send to the front line of a decadelong war against jihadists, according to footage of the ceremony on Malian state television. On the southern end, out of sight, was the swelling base</p>

of [Wagner Group, the Kremlin-linked military company](#) that has [deployed some 1,000 mercenaries into Mali](#) in exchange for cash and the potential for lucrative mining concessions.

“This batch of military equipment reflects our commitment to do everything possible to enhance the operations of our defense and security forces,” said Colonel Assimi Goita, who seized power in a 2020 coup and gave no details on how the aircraft were acquired. Standing next to him was Russia’s ambassador, Igor Gromyko, grandson of Andrei Gromyko, a prominent Soviet-era diplomat, who added: “Cooperation with Mali is going very well in the military field and in all other areas.” Shortly after, Mr. Goita received a call from President [Vladimir Putin](#).

Russia’s conventional forces are getting bogged down in Ukraine. But in weak-but-resource-rich states, its military diplomacy is becoming more entrenched and unbridled.

This year, Wagner mercenaries have deployed alongside Malian forces across the West African nation’s central and northern states. Since March, Russian fighters have been involved in at least six alleged massacres, according to survivors, Western and United Nations officials and human-rights organizations, causing tens of thousands of people to flee across the border to Mauritania.

U.N. investigators, in an unpublished report viewed by The Wall Street Journal, said a joint force of Malian and “white-skinned” fighters raided a group of herders near the border with Mauritania, executing dozens of them. While the incident took place as part of an operation against jihadists, there was no fighting and the herders were unarmed, survivors told the Journal in interviews.

In several cases, Wagner sent geologists to scout resource-rich regions in southwest and central Mali ahead of its mercenaries, Western security officials said, adding that the timing suggests that Wagner is using military force to clear populations from areas where jihadists operate so that the company can access them for exploration and mining.

“Mali is the nexus of a country with important natural resources and a weak government, where Russia can provide services and get access through Wagner,” said Anna Borshchevskaya, a Russia-focused fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Neither Wagner nor the Kremlin responded to requests for comment. Mali’s junta, armed forces and mining ministry didn’t respond to requests for comment. Mali’s Foreign Minister, Abdoulaye Diop, told the U.N. Security Council in June, “We know nothing about Wagner.”

Mali is one of a growing list of African countries where an isolated Mr. Putin is seeking to leverage a network of allies outside government to project power and raise revenue. The Wagner Group is now operating in Mali, Syria, Sudan and the Central African Republic. With an estimated 5,000 men stationed on the continent, its footprint is almost as large as the U.S. deployment of around 6,000 troops and support personnel.

Run by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a businessman who is known as President Putin’s chef because of his catering contracts with the Kremlin, Wagner has become a key tool of Russian influence and alternative revenue in faraway conflict zones, according to the U.S. government and EU Council, both of which have sanctioned the group.

On Ukraine’s battlefield, [Wagner soldiers operate under the overall command of the Russian military unit responsible for the area](#), and are integrated into the Russian military’s logistics chain, according to Ukraine’s military-intelligence agency. Mr. Prigozhin, who has been repeatedly photographed in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine and touring Russian prisons to recruit new fighters, was recently given the country’s highest award, the Hero of Russia.

The Kremlin says it has no connection to Wagner, but [Russia’s official media has in recent months been awash with reportage about the company’s heroic exploits in Ukraine](#).



Mr. Prigozhin has repeatedly denied any affiliation with Wagner and said in a recent written answer to a question from the Journal that he “doesn’t know anything” about the group.

The company offers muscular military assistance to allies without officially implicating the Kremlin. Mr. Prigozhin and Wagner mercenaries regularly travel on Russian military aircraft in Africa, said Gleb Irisov, a former Russian air force signals officer who defected to the West, as well as Western security officials. In Mali, Wagner has been quietly evolving into a much larger network of businesses, including mining firms and political consultants which offer gold-extraction services, advice on political campaigning and social media disinformation, according to the U.S. Treasury.

Wagner’s African operations have produced mixed results. The company was hired by Mozambique in 2019 to crush an affiliate of Islamic State, but was forced to retreat after several of its fighters were captured and beheaded by the jihadists, say Western and African officials. Mozambique scrapped the outfit’s contract. In Mauritania, civic organizations have protested the killings of the country’s citizens on the other side of the border.

The stakes are especially high in Mali, a mineral-rich country as big as the combined territory of California, Texas and Montana that has been roiled by conflict with Tuareg ethnic rebels and, more recently, violent jihadist groups.

France, the former colonial power in Bamako, retained influence here and stepped in with a military intervention after jihadists affiliated with al Qaeda and Islamic State took over the country’s north in 2012. The U.S. and other Western nations came to assist the French-led operation as a part of a broad effort to root out extremists from the Sahel region in northern Africa.

A year after a pro-Russian military faction seized power in 2021, the French began pulling out their 1,000 troops. Relations quickly chilled between Mali and Washington. In April, the U.S. State Department blocked the junta’s request to import a military-grade transponder for their single C-295 turboprop troop transporter “due to foreign policy concerns,” according to documents reviewed by the Journal.

Frustrated at being frozen out by the West, members of the junta met with Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, at the U.N., say Western security officials. Mr. Lavrov invited them to Moscow, where they were offered a tour of Wagner services. One senior U.S. official said Washington was blindsided by Russia’s arrival. “We were watching jihadists and not the Malian government and definitely not the Russians,” the official said.

Wagner signed a contract in December of 2021 with the junta, agreeing to help with the fight against Islamist extremists in exchange for \$10 million a month, say Western security and U.N. officials.

Wagner quickly made it clear that it had other financial ambitions beyond collecting a monthly mercenary paycheck.

In March, Wagner deployed Andrei Mandel, the head of the St. Petersburg, Russia-based natural-resources venture M Invest, to Mali, the Western security officials said. Mr. Mandel already had a record with the U.S. In 2020, the U.S. Treasury sanctioned him for alleged involvement with Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014. That same year, he and Mr. Prigozhin drew sanctions for allegedly attempting to interfere in U.S. elections and for operating gold ventures in Sudan, which Washington said was exploiting the country’s minerals and “serving as a cover” for Wagner forces operating there.

The U.S. extended an asset freeze to companies including M Invest, which it said “serves as a cover” for Wagner forces operating in Sudan and barred U.S. citizens and entities from entering into any transactions with them.

Neither Mr. Prigozhin nor M Invest responded to requests for comment on the mining company. Mr. Mandel couldn’t be reached for comment.

Mali is Africa's fourth-biggest exporter of gold. Mali also holds large reserves of oil, manganese, uranium, and lithium, a metal used to make electric-car batteries, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The government is negotiating with Wagner over two gold-mining concessions in the south of Mali, according to Hamma Agh Mahmoud, a Tuareg leader and former Malian minister.

This summer, Wagner forces moved close to Intahaka in the northeast, the site of a giant informal gold mine worked by villagers with picks and shovels, said another Tuareg leader, and the Western security officials. These people said the Malian army and local rebel groups have an arrangement to let the villagers work the mine in exchange for a percentage of the production.

They said Wagner has been brought into that deal, which could give the Russian company access to a stake in the area's gold revenue stream.

Sudanese gold traders who long dominated the trade across swaths of Mali have left, as a result of military operations, the Western officials said, replaced by Russians who are selling Malian gold in Dubai through middlemen.

With its new military deployment, "Wagner is moving to take over the North's natural resources," said Mr. Agh Mahmoud, the Tuareg leader.

### **Human Cost**

Caught in the middle of Wagner's ambitions are local populations across Mali's western and central provinces. Thousands have fled across neighboring borders.

Wagner troops first deployed with Malian forces in February at the Diabaly military base, in Western Mali, using the facility to conduct torture and executions of suspected jihadists, say Western security officials and human-rights organizations. The group then moved along one of the country's main trunk roads to an area near Mauritania, where nomadic herders roam both sides of the border.

It was there, near a well known as Robinet El Ataye, that the attack documented by the U.N. took place on March 5. A Mauritanian herder said he was there that morning when a convoy of motorcycles arrived with men in baklavas and gloves, as well as two pickup trucks mounted with machine guns. The herder said the soldiers included members of the Malian army and Wagner mercenaries.

The herder said the troops loaded goats and sheeps into their trucks and then seemed to be working through a list of names of people to detain. "They tied my hands in the back and blindfolded me with my turban," he said. They took away 35 people, the herder said, including a cousin and an elder brother, but left him and two others behind.

Two days later, a villager who was looking for his cattle found burned bodies around 10 miles away, then brought the herder to the scene on a motorcycle. "We could not identify them," said the herder. "When we left, I realized my cousin and my brother had been killed," he said. "I will never see them again."

Later that month, another joint Wagner-Malian group headed north, killing an estimated 500 people, in the market town of Moura in central Mali, according to survivors, Western security officials and human-rights activists.

The Wagner troops that accompanied the local army didn't identify themselves but came with the same attire and equipment as publicly-available pictures of Russian mercenaries in Mali, the survivors said.

Survivors say the mercenaries took a prominent part in the rounding and killing of locals. Ibrahima Tamboura, 25, who ran a Moura market stall, said he witnessed the execution of a neighbor. "The white men killed someone in front of the house," he said. "They shot him at close range with a big machine gun, bigger than normal ones they have in Mali.

	<p>Mali's government says that in Moura it killed 203 terrorists linked to al Qaeda and has said that the men had likely died from bullet wounds while fighting.</p> <p>Displaced survivors say they have been left destitute after the combined Wagner and Malian forces plundered their cattle and savings, which they carried in cash and gold. Disruptions to cross-border trading corridors and the harvest of millet are pushing regional food prices higher.</p> <p>"The Wagner Group will not bring peace to Mali," Richard Mills Jr., the U.S. deputy ambassador to the U.N. said in June. "Instead, it will only divert natural and economic resources away from Mali's fight against terrorism."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Coffee pricier? Brazil harvest falters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/coffee-could-get-even-pricier-as-brazils-harvest-falters-11661079602">https://www.wsj.com/articles/coffee-could-get-even-pricier-as-brazils-harvest-falters-11661079602</a>
GIST	<p>A poor harvest in the world's largest coffee producer threatens to push the cost of a cup of joe even higher.</p> <p>Farmers in Brazil are dealing with the fallout from freakish weather last year, where plantations endured first drought <a href="#">and then frost</a>. Some say that their crop of higher-end arabica coffee beans will be less than half what it could be in a good year.</p> <p>Some of that bad news is already priced in for investors, coffee companies and drinkers. Brazil's poor weather helped <a href="#">push coffee futures to multiyear highs</a> in 2021, in one of a string of disruptions to global commodity markets. But if this year's resulting crop proves even smaller than feared, that could exacerbate an international supply shortfall and help fuel new price gains.</p> <p>Brazil matters to the global coffee market because it is by far the world's biggest exporter. The upset is worse because its arabica coffee production runs in a two-year cycle, yielding a bigger crop in even-numbered years. Meanwhile, bad weather has also hurt the coffee industry in neighboring Colombia, another major producer.</p> <p>After barely budging for years, household coffee bills have shot upward in the last year or so, U.S. consumer-price data shows. The coffee industry, like others, has struggled with both supply-chain issues and high costs.</p> <p>Global arabica prices are likely to rise once estimates for this year's harvest in Brazil start to be completed, said Thiago Cazarini, a Brazil-based coffee broker at Cazarini Trading Co. While worries about the global economy have <a href="#">weighed on coffee prices</a> recently, "it is very dangerous to leave fundamentals behind," he said.</p> <p>Analysts once predicted Brazil's arabica crop for the 12 months starting in July could match the record set two years earlier of 48.7 million bags, each holding 132 pounds of coffee. But the final figure is likely to be much lower. An early official forecast from Brazil is for just 35.7 million bags.</p> <p>"This is a big crisis for us," said José Marcos Magalhães, a coffee farmer and president of the Minasul coffee cooperative. Minasul's 9,000-plus members commit to supplying a certain amount of coffee each season, but this year it will let them turn in half of what they promised.</p> <p>It expects to receive less than a million bags of coffee, down from 2.2 million in 2020. "Some growers don't even have that half that we're asking for," Mr. Magalhães said.</p> <p>Ademar Laitano, 57, has been in the coffee business his whole life, taking after his father. He has a business that helps other growers export, and a farm in Minas Gerais, the state where roughly half of all Brazil's arabica is grown.</p>

	<p>In a good year, Mr. Laitano said he could grow enough coffee to fill 4,000 bags. He said this year he is expecting half of that amount.</p> <p>Market-watchers point to other signs of coffee demand outstripping supply, which could also bolster prices. The International Coffee Organization says global consumption will run ahead of production for a second year running, while Fitch Solutions says that stocks in <a href="#">Intercontinental Exchange</a> warehouses are at their lowest level this century.</p> <p>Falling supply and the drop in coffee stocks points to higher prices over the next three to six months, said Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank.</p> <p>Coffee futures surged in 2021 and early this year, hitting an almost 10-year high of \$2.58 a pound in February. They have since retreated somewhat, to about \$2.23 a pound, but remain elevated compared with recent years.</p> <p>Fitch doesn't believe prices will rise further, but says a drop in Brazilian exports, coupled with a lack of warehouse stocks, will keep prices buoyant. It recently lifted its arabica forecast to \$2.15 a pound for the rest of this year, slightly below recent levels.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Calif. largest 2022 wildfire 95% contained</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/mckinney-fire-is-95-contained-weeks-after-erupting-in-northern-california-11661113013?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/mckinney-fire-is-95-contained-weeks-after-erupting-in-northern-california-11661113013?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>The McKinney Fire, California's largest wildfire of the year, is now 95% contained, nearly a month after it first erupted near Klamath National Forest.</p> <p>The fire, <a href="#">which began July 29</a> in Northern California, has scorched 60,138 acres, claimed four lives, and spurred hundreds of evacuations. It also destroyed or damaged more than 100 homes, officials said.</p> <p>The Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office on Friday identified <a href="#">the four victims killed in the blaze</a> as local residents Kathleen Shoopman, 73 years old; Charles Kays, 79; Judith Kays, 82; and John Cogan, 76.</p> <p>The sheriff's office didn't offer details on how the victims died but had previously stated that two people <a href="#">were found in a burned-out car</a>, likely as they tried to evacuate, and the other two died in their homes.</p> <p>DNA and dental records were used to identify the victims killed as the McKinney Fire ripped through Klamath River, Calif., a small community of a few hundred residents, officials said.</p> <p>The U.S. Forest Service on Aug. 8 issued a statement identifying Ms. Shoopman as a long-time employee of the agency. Ms. Shoopman started her career as a wildfire lookout on Baldy Mountain in 1974 and worked and lived in the area for over five decades, the statement said.</p> <p>Investigators have yet to determine a cause for the McKinney Fire. A lawsuit filed Thursday in Sacramento Superior Court on behalf of roughly 25 affected homeowners alleged that electric utility PacifiCorp is responsible for the blaze.</p> <p>The lawsuit alleged that the wildfire started after "electrical equipment within PacifiCorp's utility infrastructure contacted, or caused sparks to contact, surrounding vegetation."</p> <p>A spokesman for PacifiCorp, an Oregon-based unit of Berkshire Hathaway Energy, said the company doesn't comment on pending litigation.</p>

	<p>While the McKinney Fire is 95% under control, firefighters are still working to stamp out its final hot spots, according to the latest update from the U.S. Forest Service. Dry heat and gusty winds over the weekend raised concerns about flare ups.</p> <p>“Firefighters will also be prepared to provide suppression support as needed for any holdover fires and new starts that may pop up,” the agency said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Rivalry in the information sphere</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220819-rivalry-in-the-information-sphere">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220819-rivalry-in-the-information-sphere</a>
GIST	<p>Information and information technologies infuse all parts of modern society — in peacetime, during periods of strategic competition, and during wartime. Since the early 2000s, advanced information technologies for rapidly sharing, processing, and analyzing data have had a significant effect on the character of Russian military operations. An examination of the Russian military-scientific literature reveals the centrality of the concept of information confrontation in Russian military strategy.</p> <p>Information confrontation, or <i>informatsionnoe protivoborstvo</i> (IPb), is a distinct element of Russian strategic thinking in the post–Cold War era. Russia sees itself as being in a constant state of information confrontation with the West as it tries to expand its own dominance and prevent its adversaries from gaining influence.</p> <p>In this new <a href="#">report</a> from <a href="#">RAND</a>, the authors examine prevailing definitions and types of information confrontation, and they discuss the historical evolution of Russian (and Soviet) influence operations and psychological warfare, from 18th-century Imperial Russia up to the Vladimir Putin era. As a fundamental element of Russian strategy, information confrontation is evolving from something primarily carried out to supplement traditional means of waging war into something that is carried out continuously and in peacetime to shape the operational environment so that it will be malleable in future conflicts.</p> <p>The authors also analyze the experience of Ukraine, which has been the subject of one of Russia’s most comprehensive IPb and hybrid warfare campaigns in recent years. Ukraine offers a window into the present-day role of IPb and Russian activities and intentions in the information domain.</p> <p><b>Key Findings</b></p> <p><b><i>Information confrontation is discussed at length in the Russian military-scientific literature, but there is disagreement among experts about how to define the term</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Related (but distinct) terms and concepts are <i>information influence</i> and <i>information warfare</i>.</li> <li>· The Russian military-scientific literature frequently equates the strategic impact of information weapons with that of weapons of mass destruction.</li> <li>· Russian military experts have called for the development of a consistent, unified definition of <i>information confrontation</i>.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Information confrontation can be carried out by state and nonstate actors using a range of tools</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Informational-psychological confrontation consists of efforts to influence the enemy’s population and military forces.</li> <li>· Informational-technical confrontation involves the physical manipulation or destruction of information networks.</li> <li>· State actors executing information confrontation include the military and security services. Nonstate actors support information confrontation as well.</li> </ul> <p><b>Information confrontation has deep roots in Russian (and Soviet) military thinking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The Napoleonic Wars shaped later Russian military thought on psychological operations.</li> <li>· Through the Great War and the Russian Revolution and then the Cold War, the use of propaganda and psychological operations improved in quality and effectiveness.</li> <li>· In the post–Cold War era, Russia perceived it was falling behind the West in the information domain. The Gulf War profoundly shaped Russian thinking about IPb, and Russian military experts also drew lessons from the Kosovo conflict and U.S. military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 21st century.</li> </ul>

· Information campaigns that once played supporting roles in combat are now evolving to become a centerpiece of modern hybrid warfare.

### Recommendations

- The U.S. intelligence community should study the Russian military-scientific literature to better understand Russian activities and intentions in the information domain and to gain insight into the role of information in Russian military strategy and how Russia perceives U.S. information operations.
- U.S. military service intelligence should also examine publicly available, open-source, and unclassified Russian-language reports.
- The U.S. military should more closely monitor Russian rhetoric regarding the distortion of historical facts, especially in Eastern Europe, as an emergent tool of information confrontation.
- Because Ukraine is considered a proving ground for Russian subversive activities, Ukraine's vibrant and prolific scholarly community should be engaged. The United States would benefit from opening its analytical aperture to incorporate the scholarly literature of Ukraine and other states that serve as litmus tests for Russian efforts.
- Further research is warranted to study information confrontation in hybrid warfare — that is, how it is used as an instrument of soft power and how international governance mechanisms might regulate information confrontation in the future.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Western tech guides Russia's weapons</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220819-silicon-lifeline-report-reveals-western-technology-guiding-russia-s-weapons-in-ukraine">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220819-silicon-lifeline-report-reveals-western-technology-guiding-russia-s-weapons-in-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>Microelectronics produced in the United States and allied countries are crucial components of Russian weapons systems used in the Ukraine invasion, according to a report by Britain's Royal United Services Institute.</p> <p><a href="#">The RUSI report</a>, <i>Silicon Lifeline: Western Electronics as the Heart of Russia's War Machine</i>, says more than 450 foreign-made components have been found in Russian weapons recovered in Ukraine. The report's authors say Moscow acquired critical technology from companies in the United States, Europe and Asia in the years before the invasion.</p> <p>Ukraine says Russia fired more than 3,650 missiles and guided rockets into its territory in first five months of the war. Most of the weapons rely highly on Western-made microelectronic technologies, according to report co-author Gary Somerville, a research fellow at RUSI's Open-Source Intelligence and Analysis Research Group.</p> <p>"It doesn't appear that they actually have the ability to reproduce – at least to the same level of sophistication and at scale – a lot of these critical microelectronics. These are the ones that would be absolutely essential for, for example precision-guided munitions which have very sophisticated processing units," Somerville told VOA.</p> <p>That includes Russia's Iskander 9M727 cruise missile, one of its most advanced weapons. RUSI researchers recovered some missiles in the field inside Ukraine and inspect the microelectronics inside.</p> <p>They found several Western-sourced components, including digital signal processors, flash memory modules and static RAM modules made by U.S.-based companies including Texas Instruments, Advanced Micro Devices and Cypress Semiconductor, along ethernet cabling that originated from American, Dutch and German companies.</p> <p>Russia's Kh-101 cruise missiles, some of which targeted the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, were found to contain 31 foreign components.</p>



## Common Chips

All the microelectronics companies cited in the report said they comply with trade sanctions and they have stopped selling components to Russia. There is no suggestion in the report that the companies broke any export control laws.

“How is Russia possibly getting hold of this stuff? When we actually looked through a lot of these components, they are quite prosaic and in many ways ubiquitous, they can be found in any sort of electronics really – microwaves, dishwashers,” Somerville said.

Such microelectronics were freely available to Russia before its invasion of Ukraine.

However, RUSI also identified at least 81 components classified as “dual-use” by the U.S. Commerce Department and subject to U.S. export controls.

They include a high-performance CMOS static RAM microchip originally made by U.S.-based Cypress Semiconductor, found inside a handheld navigational system used by Russia’s special forces to pinpoint their position and estimate coordinates for precision artillery and air strikes.

“The component is a high-speed, ultra-low-power memory chip<sup>148</sup> that is classified as a dual-use good for export purposes,” according to the RUSI report.

Two-thirds of the foreign components found in Russian weapons systems were manufactured by U.S.-based companies. Japan was the second-biggest supplier.

## Export Bans

Many of the microelectronics found in the weapons were decades old and, following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February, many states have banned the export of such components to Russia.

Somerville pointed to Russia’s history of using elaborate methods to procure technology, Somerville said.

“It’s through the use of a number of front companies that, on the surface when you conduct a due diligence check, appear to be legitimate — but in reality are actually, or can be somewhat affiliated with, large Russian companies that are actually members of the military-industrial complex,” he said.

The report details how Russia also uses false end-user certificates and transshipment companies based in third countries, including several in Hong Kong, to obscure the final destination.

It cites Russian customs records showing that in March 2021, one company imported \$600,000 worth of electronics manufactured by Texas Instruments through a Hong Kong-based distributor. Seven months later, the same company imported another \$1.1 million worth of microelectronics made by Xilinx, according to RUSI.

U.S. and allied sanctions imposed on Russian weapons manufacturers and companies supplying them with components must be tightened, Somerville said.

“What the sanctions and effective enforcement of these sanctions can do is raise the costs on Russia to acquire these particular microelectronics,” he said.

The report’s authors say Russia is now scrambling to procure microelectronics in bulk, and that its military could be permanently weakened if the supply can be cut off.

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HEADLINE	08/21 Chechen leader’s ‘holy jihad’ in Ukraine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/featured/chechen-kadyrovs-holy-jihad-in-ukraine-and-anti-americanism/">https://www.hstoday.us/featured/chechen-kadyrovs-holy-jihad-in-ukraine-and-anti-americanism/</a>

*Information manipulation has become a key political tool of the Kremlin to gain internal public support for Putin's war against Ukraine. Anti-Western ideology and a "holy jihad" of the Chechen fighters have been raised to a high level of Russian propaganda. Muftiates (Spiritual Administration of Muslims) of the Muslim republics of Russia substantiated its fatwa (decree by an Islamic religious leader) on holy jihad in Ukraine by the need to repel a military threat from the United States and NATO. Russian President Vladimir Putin's anti-American sentiment serves as an Islamic theological tool with which state-backed muftis in Russia issue fatwas on holy jihad against Ukraine, NATO, and the "collective West."*

### ***Muslim Fratricidal War in Ukraine***

Muslims of post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus region participate in Putin's barbaric war on Ukraine helping both opposing sides, Russians and Ukrainians, two close Slavic Orthodox nations. Islamic clerics and Muslim soldiers of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds seek to justify their participation in the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II relying on the theological teachings of holy jihad from the Quran and Hadith in favor of both parties.

Perhaps the most numerous and combat-ready Muslim military units, as the half-year war has proved, are the pro-Kremlin Chechen fighters known as "Kadyrovites" (meaning "Kadyrov's men") under the command of Chechnya's brutal leader Ramzan Kadyrov, and the Chechen rebel battalions of Sheikh Mansur and Dzhokhar Dudayev fighting against their fellow believers, on the side of Kyiv.

The Russian Defense Ministry does not disclose the exact number of the Kadyrovites in Ukraine. At the start of the invasion, Kadyrov, Putin's "foot soldier" as he often describes himself, declared that more than [70,000 Chechen "volunteers"](#) were ready to fulfill the order of Russia's Supreme Commander-in-Chief to cleanse Ukraine of "Bandera scum, Nazis and Shaitans" (devil). On February 26, on the main square of the region's capital, Grozny, he blessed [12,000 Chechen soldiers](#) for "holy jihad" in Ukraine. However, in reality, only about [2,000 Chechen military personnel](#) of the Akhmad Kadyrov Special Motorized Regiment of Russia's National Guard, Rosgvardia's 249th Separate Special Motorized Battalion Yug ("South"), and the Defense Ministry's Special Battalion Vostok ("East") are currently operating on the frontline in Ukraine, rotating periodically.

On the other side, about 500-600 anti-Russian Chechen fighters of three main units – the battalions of [Sheikh Mansur](#) and [Dzhokhar Dudayev](#), and the [Crazy Pack assault squad](#) – are fighting against the Kadyrovites and helping Ukraine's armed forces. Many of these fighters are veteran rebels of the first and second Chechen wars and staunch supporters of Chechen independence challenging Moscow. At the beginning of the war, Akhmed Zakayev, the leader of the Chechen separatist government in exile, [proposed](#) to the Ukraine government to conclude an agreement with his Chechen Republic of Ichkeria to establish volunteer detachments of Chechens residing abroad to fight against Russia together.

In response, Chechnya's authoritarian populist leader Ramzan Kadyrov announced a [\\$1 million reward](#) on the heads of two Chechen units' commanders, battalions of Sheikh Mansur and Dzhokhar Dudayev, which is typical of his boastful nature. Kadyrov, apparently, could not dare hunt for the Chechen Crazy Pack commander, since it is part of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The backbone of the assault squad is composed of Chechen war veterans. [Kazbek Kurazov](#), the Crazy Pack's military leader, sees his unit not as an informal or illegal military formation, but as part of the Ukrainian army, which also includes Azerbaijani fighters.

### ***How Putin's Muftis Exploit Anti-Americanism for Holy Jihad***

A tough ideological war has unfolded between opposing Chechen military units in Ukraine, which interpret the Quranic teachings on holy jihad in their own way in order to theologically justify their participation in someone else's war. Despite his shallow and grossly [simplistic theological knowledge](#), Ramzan Kadyrov, Putin's brutal flagbearer, became famous during the war as the toughest religious mouthpiece and mastermind behind the Chechen holy jihad in Ukraine.

To inspire the Chechen troops, on March 4, on his Telegram channel with more than 2.6 million followers, Kadyrov weaponized the Islamic holy jihad doctrine, declaring that "the courageous and fearless Chechen fighters are [waging holy jihad](#) in Ukraine for the sake of Allah and continuing the path of Akhmad-Haji

Kadyrov.” He mocked the anti-Russian Chechen fighters of the Dzhokhar Dudayev and Sheikh Mansur battalions as “Chechen-speaking Shaitans” disgracing not only themselves and their teips (Chechen tribal clans) but also sacred Islam, defecting to the side of the satanic West, Bandera fascists and Nazis.

As the war raged, the Grand Muftiate (Spiritual Administration of Muslims) of Chechnya and top Muslim clerics, directly subordinate to the brutal authoritarian leader Kadyrov, tried to inspire the Chechen forces with holy jihad. The Chechen Grand Mufti, Sheikh Salakh Mezhiyev, and advisor to the head of the Chechen republic on religious affairs, Adam Shakhidov, exploited the institutional capacity of the Spiritual Administration of the Chechen Republic to promote Kadyrov’s “holy jihad” in Ukraine, which leads to twisted fragments of Sharia.

Following [Putin’s infamous televised speech](#) to launch a special military operation on “denazification and demilitarization” of Ukraine, the [Chechen Grand Mufti, Salakh Mezhiyev](#), declared the Russian invasion a “holy jihad” on February 27, albeit it was not confirmed by issuing a Fatwa (Islamic religious decree). Chechen soldiers, according to his unfounded claims, were fighting “for the Quran, for Allah Almighty” and to save both Russia and Islam from “debauchery and all sorts of filth” spread by the West. “Russia protects Islam by allowing Muslims to pray freely and build mosques, while in Ukraine, which has become a hotbed of Western depravity, there is no such freedom of religion,” [he explained](#) as the reasons for the “holy jihad” in Ukraine. Therefore, “Chechens are waging a holy jihad against Western Shaitans (devil) in Ukraine seeking to destroy our beloved homeland,” he concluded. As a result, Mezhiyev misinterpreted the theological legitimacy of “Chechen holy jihad” in Ukraine in terms of the Quranic sciences, drawing mockery from top Salafi-Jihadi ideologues in the post-Soviet space and from leading Sunni Islamic scholars outside of Russia. He has echoed the anti-American political rhetoric of Russia’s Putin and his key “foot-soldier” Ramzan Kadyrov, simplifying the Quranic holy jihad doctrine to suit their political preferences in order to justify a bloody invasion of Ukraine.

Chechen parliament speaker [Magomed Daudov also fanned](#) the flames of “holy jihad” in Ukraine, declaring that Chechen soldiers “defend Islam” and “fight against the Western henchmen of Iblis” (the leader of the devils in Islamic mythology). He added that “until Putin stops us, we do not abandon jihad and will reach Berlin.”

Another official, Adam Shakhidov, an adviser to the Chechen leader on religious issues, regularly [glorifies Chechen “holy jihad”](#) in Ukraine, stoking anti-American sentiment in Russia’s conservative Muslim society. According to him, Muslim soldiers in Ukraine are Mujahideen (Muslim warriors), and those who died during the special operation will become Shaheed (martyrs). He “found” a theological justification for the Chechen “holy jihad” under the leadership of the Russian Christian Army, which does not contradict Sharia law and is not Kufr (infidelity). He cited the example of the [Medina agreement](#) from the history of Islam in 622, which regulated the relations of Muslims with the Jews of Medina and joint defense against a common external enemy. In conclusion, as usual in Kadyrov’s authoritarian Chechnya, Adam Shakhidov eulogized Chechen fighters “defending the honor of Islam and Russia,” which “Shaitan forces led by the U.S.” want to destroy “through LGBT, Ukrainian Nazis and fascists.”

Thus, Ramzan Kadyrov, relying on Putin’s strong shoulder and the Kremlin’s unlimited financial support, has created a cult of personality around himself and his martyred father, and also exploited the ideological legitimacy of the Sunni Qadiri tariqa (Sufi order) to strengthen anti-Americanism in Russia and to boost his “holy jihad” in Ukraine. He turned Chechnya’s Spiritual Board of Muslims into an ideological and propaganda tool to consolidate his political ambitions and influence. While his radical support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine has cemented his position among the “war hawks” of Putin’s inner circle, his “holy jihad” rhetoric has drawn backlash in the Muslim world.

### ***Fatwa Against NATO***

The “holy jihad” ideologues orchestrated the voices of pro-Kremlin Muslim religious institutions to support the Russian military operation to “denazify and demilitarize” Ukraine. In Russia, the ranks of the Grand Muftiates and Muslim clerics are expanding adapting fatwas on holy jihad in Ukraine with theological justifications. One such pro-Moscow event was the Conference of the Spiritual Leaders of

Russian Muslims in North Ossetia on March 16, during which a [fatwa was adopted](#) that theologically defined Putin's war in Ukraine as a "holy jihad" and the Muslims killed in it as "Shaheed" (martyrs).

The fatwa laid out Kadyrov's vision of "Chechen Holy Jihad" as an ongoing struggle for survival between good and evil, between traditional values and the vile ideas of Satanism, between the warriors of Allah and Iblis' henchmen represented by the criminal U.S. trying to destroy Russia. The Russian military operation in Ukraine, the fatwa justified, is a forced defensive and preventive measure to protect Russia and all its citizens (including Muslims) from the real threat of the use of nuclear and biological weapons by NATO and the "collective West."

Thus, the Conference theologically justified the Russian invasion of Ukraine and tried to rally the support of the country's 20 million Muslim population. The pro-Kremlin choir about "holy jihad in Ukraine" was quickly backed by the head of the Central Spiritual Muslim Board of Russia [Talgat Tadzhuddin](#), the Mufti of the Chuvash Republic [Albir Krganov](#), the mufti of the Republic of Tatarstan [Kamil Samigullin](#), the Mufti of Bashkortostan [Ainur Birgalin](#) and other Islamic clerics of Russia. But Russia's flagship region in support of Putin's war remains Kadyrov's Chechnya, spreading theological teachings about "holy jihad" not only among Russian Muslims but also in post-Soviet Central Asia and Caucasus.

### ***Pro-Ukraine Chechen Fighters' Holy Jihad***

In response to a fatwa by pro-Moscow Islamic clerics, commander of the Dzhokhar Dudayev Battalion, [Adam Osmayev, accused](#) the Chechen leader Kadyrov and his Grand Mufti Mezhiev of deliberately distorting the Quranic concept of holy jihad. He recalled that the father of the current Chechen leader Akhmat Kadyrov being the Grand Mufti, first called for jihad against Russia, and then sold out himself to Putin, calling for a "holy jihad" against the insurgents of Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Today, his son Ramzan is calling for jihad against Ukraine. Therefore, the "Kadyrov family jihads have always been corrupt, just like themselves," he concluded. He explained the participation of the Chechen opposition in the war on the side of Ukraine with "the duty of Chechen patriots to defend their Homeland from Putin's aggression, since not only the fate of Ukraine, but also the future of Ichkeria is being decided in the Donbas."

[Said Ismagilov, the Grand Mufti of Ukraine](#), who is of Tatar origin, decided to oppose pro-Kremlin Islamic clerics not only for his sermons and speeches on holy jihad, but also to inspire the large Ukrainian Muslim population by his personal example. Following the outbreak of the war, he changed his spiritual job in the Ummah mosque to a soldier [joining the Ukrainian army](#) to encourage the country's Muslims to wage holy jihad against the Russian invaders.

[Kazbek Kurazov](#), commander of the Chechen Crazy Pack assault squad, claims that his soldiers in Ukraine are continuing the holy jihad of their ancestors, who fought against the Russian Empire for the past 400 years for their religion and the freedom of Ichkeria. Another commander of the Sheikh Mansur Battalion, a veteran of two Chechen wars, [Muslim Cheberloevsky](#), also claimed his participation in the war on the Ukrainian side is a continuation of the liberation war of Ichkeria from Russian expansion and he believes in victory. [Akhmed Zakayev](#), the head of the Chechen separatist government in exile, encouraged on social media all Chechens living abroad to fight alongside the Ukrainian government. He called the brutal Kadyrov the great Dajjal (false Messiah) who, for his political and economic gain, betrayed the Chechen nation, invented a fake holy jihad in Ukraine, and prays to Putin like a god.

Well-known Islamic scholars in the post-Soviet space such as the Mufti of Crimea Ayder Rustemov, the Deputy Grand Mufti of Ukraine Emad Abu Alrub, and controversial Dagestani preacher Abu Umar Sasitlinsky opposed the fatwa of Russian muftis on "holy jihad". In a [video message](#), they theologically asserted that Russia's war against Ukraine is not a holy jihad, and the Muslims who died for Putin's criminal ideas will not become Shaheed (martyr), but will go to Jahannam (hell). From the point of view of Islamic theology, Russia is an aggressor state, seizing Ukraine soil, and those Muslim soldiers in the Russian army are traitors to Islam, they concluded. [Aider Rustemov called](#) on the Russian Muslim soldiers to leave Putin's criminal army, as the punishment of Allah would inevitably overtake them. One of the most influential Russian-speaking Salafi preachers in the North Caucasian Muslim community, [Abdullah Kosteksky](#), now in exile in Turkey, sharply rejected Kadyrov's "holy jihad", calling such Muslim soldiers



Taghuts (idolaters). The Quran forbids Muslims to fight under the command of Kafirs (disbelievers), he said, and declared it unlawful for Muslims to participate in the Ukraine war for the “Kafirs army”. [Abubakar Yangulbayev](#), a prominent leader of the ADAT popular movement for the de-occupation of Chechnya from Russia, said that the “holy jihad in Ukraine is theologically contrary to Sharia, and the actions of murtad (apostate) Ramzan Kadyrov, who idolizes Putin, is shirk (polytheism).”

### ***ISIS and al-Qaeda Denounced the Chechen Holy Jihad***

Undoubtedly, the theologically distorted fatwas of the pro-Kremlin muftis about “holy jihad in Ukraine” could lead to intra-Muslim tensions, inter-confessional conflicts and the activation of Sunni terror groups on a global scale. Chechen leader Kadyrov’s speculation on theologically sensitive doctrines, such as holy jihad, has already provoked an outrageous reaction from the Islamic State (ISIS) and al-Qaeda, the arch Sunni jihadi rivals.

For instance, the leading ideologues and thinkers of two Salafi-Jihadi groups have responded according to a tough theological doctrine of holy jihad shaping their worldview and jihadist actions on the battlefield. Both [al-Qaeda and ISIS strongly](#) denounced the involvement of Chechen fighters in the Ukrainian conflict on behalf of Russia, urging them to stay away from this alien war of “crusaders” and “infidels.”

ISIS was one of the first global jihadi groups which officially commented on the Russian-Ukrainian war in a full-page editorial in its [al-Naba newsletter](#), urging Muslims not to get involved in the “Crusader on Crusader” war. ISIS praised the Ukraine war as a “divine punishment” for crusaders for their disbelief in God Almighty, which the group hopes will destroy the “enemies of Islam.” Following an IS-Central editorial, its regional divisions, [IS-Filipino](#) and [IS-Khorasan](#), recently warned Muslims against siding with a “crusader”. According to ISIS followers, theologically, Muslims shouldn’t favor one over the other or fight for one over the other.

The prominent contemporary Salafi-Jihadi cleric and al-Qaeda ideologist [Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi](#) (born ‘Isam Bin Muhammad Bin Tahir al-Barqawi) denounced Kadyrov’s Chechen fighters performing prayers among the Ukrainian forests at the beginning of the war. He stated that “the prayers of those who have not been cleansed off the tyrant’s vile will not be accepted” since they do not abide by the principle of monotheism requiring renouncement and non-support of the tyrants. According to him, a Muslim should not fight on behalf of the Russian “tyrant” nor to defend the Ukrainian “tyrant,” since both are guilty of *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance). Al-Maqdisi urged Chechens to not support a tyrant over another because at the end of the war tyrants will “throw away Muslims as toilet paper.”

Russian-speaking followers of ISIS and al-Qaeda from Central Asia and the Caucasus strictly behave within the tough theological line of their parent organizations. Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, online theological disputes have intensified between Central Asian rival jihadi groups, al-Qaeda-linked Katibat Tawhid wal jihad, Jamaat Ansarullah, Jamaat al-Guroba on the one hand and Islamic State in Khorasan on the other. The main question is whether the Ukrainian war is a holy jihad and whether fallen Muslim fighters will go to *Jannat* (paradise) as *Shaheed* (martyrs), as prescribed in the Quran. Russian-, Uzbek- and Tajik-speaking jihadists in their Telegram media ridiculed Kadyrov’s holy jihad in Ukraine and mocked him as a *Taghud*, a traitor to Islam and a slave of *kaffir* Putin. One of the Uzbek Salafists urged the Chechen fighters to commit a real God-pleasing jihad against Russia that is killing Muslims in Syrian Idlib. ISKP’s Al-Azaim Media Foundation and Voice of Khorasan in Russian also called on Chechen Muslims to make a *hijrat* (migrate) not to Ukraine but to Afghanistan, and join the ranks of the Islamic State.

### ***Impact of Kadyrov’s Holy Jihad on Future Security***

In conclusion, the Chechen leader Kadyrov’s “holy jihad” is increasingly exacerbating the already difficult relations between ordinary Muslims, tacitly opposing the war in Ukraine, and state-backed local muftis, generously adapting fatwas on “forced defense” from the “Satanic West at the head of the U.S.” It also tests the strength of relations between various streams of political Islam in the post-Soviet countries, which are going through most difficult times against the backdrop of the growing threat of Islamic extremism. The “holy jihad” in Ukraine threatens to reopen the wounds of the recent migration of Central Asian and Caucasian radical Islamists to Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan to join the Islamic Caliphate during its heyday.

	<p>Notable, in 2014-16, a record number of Russian-speaking radical Islamists joined ISIS – <a href="#">roughly 8,500 individuals</a> – from Russia and five countries of post-Soviet Central Asia.</p> <p>The “far-fetched” theological doctrines of “holy jihad” in Ukraine risk undermining key religious foundations of the Russian state by widening the crack between pro-Kremlin Muslim leaders and their fragile social bases. There is a danger that the teleological contradictions on holy jihad could lead to intra-Muslim conflict and anti-government mobilization in Central Asia and the North Caucasus, where living standards are among the lowest in Eurasia. A further escalation of the “Chechen jihad” could ignite ideological and sectarian antagonism far beyond the battlefield. If a spark of an inter-religious conflict ignites, streams of radical Islamists who have gone through a jihadi school in world hot spots may flood into the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Russia loses 50% aircraft capacity Crimea</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2022-08-19/russia-loses-50-of-warplane-capacity-in-crimea-as-ukraine-chips-away-at-key-logistics-hub">https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2022-08-19/russia-loses-50-of-warplane-capacity-in-crimea-as-ukraine-chips-away-at-key-logistics-hub</a>
GIST	<p>Russia appears to have lost half of the capability of its Black Sea Fleet combat aircraft due to mysterious explosions on the occupied Crimean Peninsula earlier this month that already demonstrate new vulnerabilities in what <a href="#">Moscow previously considered safe havens</a>.</p> <p>A Western official told Reuters on Friday of the new assessment of combat jets belonging to the fleet, following widely reported blasts on Aug. 9 at the Saky air base near Novofedorivka on the western shore of the peninsula Russia first annexed in 2014.</p> <p>The official appears to have attributed the blasts to Ukrainian strikes, saying that forces loyal to Kyiv are now able to achieve “kinetic effects” deep behind Russian military lines.</p> <p>White House officials have previously said that Ukrainian strikes on Crimea – land it still considers its own – do not violate Kyiv’s commitments to the Biden administration not to use U.S.-supplied weapons to attack Russian territory.</p> <p>The Crimean Peninsula serves as a key logistics and command hub for the Kremlin, with a land bridge from the Russian mainland providing significant access for it to move material and troops into the conflict zone.</p> <p>It also appears to be a new focus of the Ukrainian military’s objectives. The Aug. 9 explosions came shortly before similar attacks on an airfield and an ammunition depot there this week that appear to be the result of <a href="#">sabotage operations by elite Ukrainian commandos</a>.</p> <p>The influential Black Sea Fleet previously suffered embarrassing losses when a reported Ukrainian rocket strike sunk its flagship, the <a href="#">Moskva</a>. That incident, among other high-profile battlefield failures, prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin to <a href="#">purge from command several top generals and admirals</a> overseeing his forces.</p> <p>All of these incidents have raised fears in Moscow of its ability to maintain the offensive in Ukraine. Combat there in the east and south is settling into a burgeoning standoff as the Kremlin has few answers for how it will address high casualties and low morale while also maintaining the support of the Russian people.</p> <p>Russia attempted to downplay the Aug. 9 explosions, though social media posts demonstrated the potency of the apparent attack as well as the streams of civilians who subsequently attempted to flee the area. Russian military bloggers speculated Ukraine may have used U.S.-supplied weapons to carry out airstrikes, such as the ATACMS long-range missile systems – referred to in Pentagon parlance as “attack ‘ems.”</p>



	<p>Analysts noted at least two strikes occurred simultaneously, undermining Russian assertions of benign, poor fire protocols.</p> <p>“The Kremlin has little incentive to accuse Ukraine of conducting strikes that caused the damage since such strikes would demonstrate the ineffectiveness of Russian air defense systems, which the Ukrainian sinking of the Moskva had already revealed,” the Institute for the Study of War, which has tracked Russian military movements since its invasion began Feb. 24, concluded in an analysis note it published at the time.</p> <p>“The apparent simultaneity of explosions at two distinct facilities likely rules out the official Russian version of accidental fire, but it does not rule out either sabotage or long-range missile strike,” it added. “Ukraine could have modified its Neptune missiles for land-attack use (as the Russians have done with both anti-shipping and anti-aircraft missiles), but there is no evidence to support this hypothesis at this time.”</p> <p>Russia on Friday proclaimed in a state media post that its air defense system worked successfully at the city of Yevpatoriya, roughly 15 miles up the Crimean coast from Novofedorivka, referencing an unnamed eyewitness who witnessed two rockets launched into the sky at night.</p> <p>“Crimea is under reliable protection,” Oleg Kryuchkov, a senior Russian-backed official in Crimea, said on his Telegram channel.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/21 Community Emergency Response Team</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article264387136.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article264387136.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Sometimes law enforcement cannot quickly get to areas when there has been a large natural disaster. A training that just landed in Gig Harbor teaches residents how to survive until they get there.</p> <p>The Community Emergency Response Team Basic Training teaches members what to do before, during, and after dangerous situations their communities may face. The first C.E.R.T class in Gig Harbor graduated on Saturday, Aug. 13.</p> <p>“Their job is to stabilize the incident, gather some information,” Abe Edmonson, Gig Harbor C.E.R.T. head instructor and Prevention Specialist at Gig Harbor Fire &amp; Medic One told The Gateway.</p> <p>The C.E.R.T. concept was developed and implemented by the Los Angeles City Fire Department in 1985.</p> <p>“The Whittier Narrows earthquake in 1987 underscored the area-wide threat of a major disaster in California. Further, it confirmed the need for training civilians to meet their immediate needs,” according to the C.E.R.T. website.</p> <p>It says there are now over 2,700 local C.E.R.T. programs nationwide and more than 600,000 trained.</p> <p>After surrounding cities implemented C.E.R.T., Gig Harbor Fire determined it was time to offer the program to their residents.</p> <p>Other Pierce County programs are in Puyallup, Auburn, Eatonville, Tacoma, University Place, Lakewood, DuPont and on Anderson Island.</p> <p>Edmonson said when there’s a large disaster that affects an entire community, residents may not see a fire truck for hours or even days. C.E.R.T. members can begin stabilizing the community, finding where the problems are and addressing the ones that they can until law enforcement shows up.</p>

“They do what they can for the greatest amount of people around them without needing much direction. Then the expectation would be that the C.E.R.T. team could rally at a location and help as needed,” Edmonson said

This first class of 14 adult Gig Harbor students are now trained in basic disaster response skills. Over three weeks the students attended seven full-day training sessions that cover various training topics.

“The people living in single family homes, which are the largest group here in the Peninsula, will need someone to document their needs and do other services. Those people will be us during these disasters,” student Paul Petach told The Gateway.

After attending seven training sessions, the students got to put their skills to use by responding to a mock earthquake. Their search and rescue skills were the main focus of the earthquake exercise.

“They threw a lot of good things at us. We had a survivor who didn’t speak English and another who was deaf. I’ve never seen that interjected into an exercise before,” Patricia Verdella Keenan told The Gateway.

This was the first time the team participated in a mock event all together.

“We didn’t do everything perfect, but everyone was doing their very best. Everyone persevered and everyone jumped in wherever help was needed. You just don’t know what to expect when it’s a disaster or an emergency, but we were committed to the end,” Keenan said.

Edmonson asked volunteers from the Tacoma C.E.R.T. program to participate as role play survivors.

“West Pierce’s C.E.R.T. program was also an option for us. We didn’t pull from them this time, but the other C.E.R.T. groups can participate as survivors for other training,” Edmonson said.

The program is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), through the Pierce County Department of Emergency Management, which oversees the Gig Harbor C.E.R.T. program, Peggy Gablehouse, the Peninsula emergency preparedness chair told The Gateway.

The local fire department usually provides the instruction, Gablehouse said.

Each student receives a backpack that’s full of gear to use when they’re responding to an emergency. It includes a vest that says C.E.R.T., gloves, a mask, eyewear, duct tape, a flashlight and medical gauze. There is also additional room for students to add granola bars, water bottles and radios.

After graduating from this program, residents can apply for an emergency workers card through the Pierce County Department of Emergency Management. They also need to pass a background test to officially become part of the C.E.R.T. team that professional responders can rely on during a disaster.

“We all hope we never have to actually use our skills and training to help save lives. But we feel better knowing that if an emergency happens we will be able to aid those in our own household, neighborhood and community,” Petach said.

These students can attend individual refreshers of this class after graduation by dropping in on local C.E.R.T. trainings in the future if they want to sharpen their skills.

“There’s definitely enough interest to build this team to be pretty large,” Edmonson said. “We are trying to put together an additional hands-on mock event before the end of the year in November.”

He said they’re working on getting a date for the next C.E.R.T. training.

Residents who want to get involved can watch for posts on the Gig Harbor Fire and Medic One website and social media feeds.

	“Our team is full of a lot of good leadership. I hope that that bleeds into good recruitment and getting a lot more folks involved with the C.E.R.T. team,” Keenan said.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Home care growing scarce in small towns</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/as-the-need-for-home-care-rises-caregivers-are-getting-harder-to-find-in-rural-wa/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/as-the-need-for-home-care-rises-caregivers-are-getting-harder-to-find-in-rural-wa/</a>
GIST	<p>About five years ago, as her mother’s hearing diminished and dementia worsened, Linda Brocklesby decided with her family that their mom could no longer live in California alone. Her children thought Washington state would be good — there were more relatives, and Brocklesby would move in.</p> <p>They settled on Sequim, in an area with new homes that felt like their own quiet, little spot, looking at the mountains. The Clallam County city is often advertised as a prime place to retire; about a third of its roughly 8,000 residents are 65 or older.</p> <p>Brocklesby wanted to hire someone to come to their house and stay with her mom for a few hours so she could run errands or get a short break. But she and her family soon found themselves facing a similar issue as thousands of others in rural and isolated communities nationwide that are rapidly aging: More and more people need care, and fewer are available to provide it.</p> <p>Caregivers assist with daily activities like preparing meals, helping with dressing and managing medications. The job descriptions have a wide range; one person may need someone for two hours a week to assist with household chores, while another may require help around the clock. For people with age-related needs or disabilities, caregivers are a line of defense against a cascade of complications — a burnt-out lightbulb may seem innocuous, until someone trips because they couldn’t see at night, breaks a bone during the fall and has to be hospitalized.</p> <p>But in rural areas, where about 1 in 5 of Americans 65 and older live, these services are less likely to be available compared with those in urban areas. The shortage is attributed to a complex web of factors: a shift of working-age people moving to urban areas, lack of financial incentives and support for professional caregivers, and in Washington, the state’s geographic features — mountains with passes that make travel difficult in the winter, islands that require ferry rides — that add another layer of difficulty.</p> <p>Feeling the strains are the rural residents who want to age in the homes they’ve lived in for decades or in the same area where they chose to retire, their family and friends who struggle to find care and fill in the gaps themselves, and the local providers who see the needs firsthand.</p> <p>“For survival, so I can keep going at this, I need to bring in some help,” Brocklesby said in April, noting that her mother’s dementia had progressed. “But it’s hard to find someone. There are fewer people available. It’s a hard job.”</p> <p>When Dani Rice became a professional caregiver, the entire town of Asotin seemed to find out immediately.</p> <p>“I had people I hardly even talk to suddenly call me and say ‘Hey, I need care, I need a caregiver. Can you do it? I’ll pay you out of pocket,’” said Rice, 34. “Somehow, my phone number gets passed around.”</p> <p>There are a handful of caregivers in the town of about 1,200 people, in Washington’s southeast corner. Across Asotin County, nearly 25% of residents are 65 and older, about 5,375 in total, and 266 people pay for professional home care, according to the state Department of Social and Health Services. This includes both older adults and younger people with disabilities.</p> <p>Most older adults needing care rely on a relative or friend; an estimated 850,000 unpaid caregivers provide about 80% of the long-term care needs in Washington — care that would equal about \$10 billion if paid</p>

for, according to DSHS. Within that unpaid group, 350,000 care for a loved one with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, according to the Alzheimer's Association of Washington.

In rural areas, the pool of family members available for care decreases as more people move to larger towns or cities for jobs, coupled with families having fewer children than previous generations. The population pyramid, where older people form the top tip, has shifted more toward a rectangle because of the large baby boom generation, said Bea Rector, secretary of the state Department of Social and Health Services' Aging and Long-Term Support Administration.

"It's both a shrinking number of people who are available to do the work, and an increasing population of people who need it," she said.

That's not limited to rural areas. More than 1 million Washington residents are 65 and older; by 2025, this population will reach 1.5 million and continue growing, according to DSHS. To meet that need, the number of professional caregivers will need to grow by at least 50%, experts say.

Alyssa Evans has worked for about 200 people as a caregiver over the years in and around the tiny North Cascades town of Concrete, population 738. She began informally caring for Rick Bartholomew in the fall of 2018, and after he had a stroke in January 2019, they tried to find him a unit in a senior housing facility. But each waitlist was at least a year and a half.

Instead, Evans opted to move Bartholomew into a trailer on her property so she could continue as his caregiver. He went on Washington's Community Options Program Entry System, a Medicaid waiver program that helps people with limited incomes or assets receive personal care and services at home or in another care environment instead of a nursing home.

Evans is paid through COPES for 166 hours per month for Bartholomew. But previous clients haven't always had the same financial assistance. Evans realized soon after a woman hired her that the woman's monthly Social Security checks weren't enough to cover Evans' hourly rate. The woman paid her at irregular intervals, forcing Evans to make a hard decision about someone she considered a friend.

"I had to stop caring for her," said Evans, 39. "I told her 'You can't just pay me when you want to.'"

WA Cares, a payroll tax passed in 2019, is intended to provide residents with an additional way to pay for long-term care they may need in the future. The program allows eligible workers in Washington to collect up to \$36,500 to pay for care needs, though it has been delayed until July 2023 after legal challenges and resistance over who can receive benefits under its initial structure.

Even with changes to allow some workers currently near retirement age — roughly 477,000 in Washington — to claim prorated benefits, the program doesn't address those who have already retired or have long-term care needs now, like 71-year-old Bartholomew.

When Bartholomew fell off a porch and broke both legs, it took 30 minutes for a volunteer ambulance to arrive. Doctors advised a move to a rehab facility, but this was when COVID-19 cases were raging in long-term care facilities.

"I said, 'Over my dead body, I'll pick him up now if I have to,'" Evans recalled.

But they knew, with his health concerns, being in Concrete was no longer an option. A unit opened in a Mount Vernon senior housing building, where he's lived for about a year. Evans drives 45 minutes each way every weekday to care for him. Bartholomew is her full-time client, though to supplement her income she also sometimes take shifts from a care agency or fills in for other caregivers.

On a cloudy day earlier this year, Evans made him soup and gave him a Glucerna shake, then went over his monthly bills and figured out a day for his cataracts surgery appointment.

“It all works out, as long as she’s with me,” Bartholomew said.

Senior Life Resources, a nonprofit based in Richland that runs a home care services program, has to get creative to find more workers for its growing client list in eight Eastern Washington counties. There are job and business fairs, and local work agencies. It’s posted employment flyers in post offices and grocery stores. The best resource is word-of-mouth; a caregiver who refers an at-least-part-time hire receives \$110 in incentive pay.

“We are trying to increase that,” said Cherie Noble, program director for Senior Life Resources’ home care services. “It’s seeming to get more and more difficult to recruit, and the need is definitely there.”

Senior Life Resources has about 1,300 clients, more than a 50% increase from six years ago, and a roster of 765 care providers. About 91% of the caregivers are women, according to Noble.

On a daily basis, Yvonne Castillo does an equation in her head: If she starts saving money and does this or that, maybe she can live somewhere else with her mom, who has dementia. But her mom has lived in Colville, a Stevens County town in northeastern Washington, for decades. Castillo worries about the mental and physical impact of an upheaval. Plus, moving is expensive.

“It’s beautiful country out here,” Castillo said of the mountain town with fewer than 5,000 people. “Things are much slower. It looks good on paper and in theory, but actually it’s different, it’s harder because we are in such a rural area and trying to get things done with my mom.”

In addition to caring for her mom, she also works at an assisted-living facility in town. Nationally, 61% of family caregivers have a job in addition to their role as caregiver, according to a 2020 joint report by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. The assisted-living provider, too, has struggled with staffing, mirroring a worker shortage in long-term care facilities across Washington and the U.S.

Stevens County has nearly 12,000 people who are 65 and older, and 537 throughout the county employ paid caregivers. Even if a client has options, it can be difficult to find the right fit with a caregiver. Castillo’s mom had four caregivers hired through a local care agency — one got burnt out, two didn’t show up on time and one wouldn’t provide the help her mom wanted.

One was scheduled to work for another client in Republic, 52 miles away. Agencies vary in how they compensate mileage, and the state reimburses caregivers for essential trips like shopping and medical appointments. The state caps reimbursable mileage at 100 miles per month, though it can authorize additional miles to access other services funded by DSHS, and Medicaid covers transportation to and from medical appointments, where the caregiver can accompany the client. But mileage adds up quickly, especially for clients in the most remote locations.

“Gas is really expensive, and when you have to drive 38 miles just to take your client shopping one way, it’s not a lucrative endeavor,” said Rice, the caregiver in Asotin. “People do have to be able to put food on their table.”

Location, Noble said, is a significant barrier. Some clients live an hour or more from the nearest Senior Life Resources office, and though there’s mileage reimbursement, rising gas prices and wear and tear on a vehicle take a toll, Noble said.

“Once clients know they have the choice and are choosing to stay in their own homes, they don’t understand how difficult it will be to have a caregiver who will travel an hour,” she said.

At the Olympic Area Agency on Aging, there’s always a waitlist, according to Susie Brandelius, who handles programs for the agency located on the Olympic Peninsula.

The clients understand there isn't much she can do. They live in a really rural area and "you can't manufacture care aides." Professional caregivers must complete 75 hours of basic training and pass a background check in order to be certified.

In Clallam County, there's a resident who has been on a home-care provider waitlist for a year who lives in Joyce, an unincorporated community on Highway 112 west of Port Angeles.

"If the care aide is living between Sequim and Port Angeles and takes a job in Joyce, that's 30 minutes," she said.

Caregiving is challenging work, and wages are comparable to jobs in retail or hospitality that might not require the same time and investments. A recent job listing through an agency in Clallam County sought a candidate with care-aide or nursing certification, driver's license and prior experience in health, hospitality or home care. The responsibilities include helping with bathing and dressing for senior clients or people recovering from medical care, cleaning a home and doing the client's shopping. The hourly weekday pay: \$18.60, and \$19.60 on weekends.

In the same town, a listing for a cook at an American-fare restaurant advertised a position entailing food prep, baking and line cooking. No experience necessary, though one year is preferred. Hourly pay: \$17 to \$20.

"It's not always the easiest path from 'I am interested in this work' to becoming a caregiver and making it through this training process," said Lynn Kimball, the executive director of Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington. "If someone else is hiring and the wage is comparable, people often look at the closest, easiest path because that is the economic reality for us all."

But caregivers have a constant bleeding heart, Rice said, even if that means taking a job that pays less than working at a fast-food restaurant. Still, she's known more than a handful of people who moved to larger towns or cities where the pay is better or jobs are closer.

"I tell people every day, when you are a caregiver you know you are making a difference in somebody's life. Without you that person wouldn't have the food they need, they wouldn't have your friendship or companionship," she said. "But prepare to live in a battleground where you know you are making a difference because there aren't enough caregivers."

By June, Brocklesby realized caring for her mom — and trying to find others to care for her — had become too much. Her mother was getting out of bed every two hours at night. Brocklesby wasn't sleeping and her back hurt.

"I realized I was going to fall apart, and I can't keep doing this," she said.

She hired two friends of her daughters for \$20 an hour for a few hours a day. That arrangement seemed to work great, for the short term. They loved her mom and Brocklesby got some time off. But she wanted to find someone during the night and looked through an agency, to little avail. The one person who came charged \$40 an hour, Brocklesby said, and fell asleep.

"It made me feel better to at least know I have done everything I can," she said. "There was definitely a lot of guilt, 'How come I can't be stronger and be able to be with my mom?'"

Her mother moved into a memory care home in Sequim where she receives 24-hour care. Brocklesby visits regularly. She has little regret about moving her to Sequim in the first place.

"Caring for her was so beautiful to me," she said. "I'm blessed that I got that time."

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/public-disclosure-vs-family-trauma-are-inquests-into-king-county-killings-by-police-worthwhile/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/public-disclosure-vs-family-trauma-are-inquests-into-king-county-killings-by-police-worthwhile/</a>
GIST	<p>Concerns over fairness and transparency led King County in 2018 to halt and overhaul its system of reviewing killings by police, after finding the inquest process tilted heavily in favor of law enforcement.</p> <p>But since inquests resumed this year, it's become apparent the revised process has police-favoring disparities of its own, leading families and some attorneys to question whether inquests are worth the trouble and pain they cause loved ones of those killed by law enforcement. No inquest jury in the past 50 years has found an officer's actions unjustified. That's led some observers to call on the county to scrap a system that's unique among Washington counties and an oddity nationwide.</p> <p>"I'm just not sure it served any purpose but to traumatize my family," said Katrina Johnson, a cousin of Charleena Lyles, a mother with mental illness whose 2017 fatal shooting by Seattle police <a href="#">was found justified during a July inquest</a>. "I just think a lot of families are going to get their hopes up, like we did, only to be let down, like we were."</p> <p>Johnson, who became a vocal police reformer after Lyles' death and has since been appointed to a commission overseeing the state police academy, said inquests, even under the revised rules, "continue the police narrative" <a href="#">and offer little in the way of answers or solace</a> to families of those killed by law enforcement.</p> <p>"The setting is difficult," she said. "It's intimidating. It was more traumatizing than helpful."</p> <p>The revised system will be on display for the third time Monday, when jurors will begin reviewing the circumstances that led to the <a href="#">shooting death of Robert Lightfeather by Federal Way police officers Austin Rogers and Tyler Turpin</a>.</p> <p>In the two inquests held this year, both involving Seattle officers, no outside experts were brought in to testify. Aside from a handful of civilian witnesses and medical experts, jurors have heard only from those ratifying the officers' actions: the officers themselves, their administrators and trainers.</p> <p>It's not yet clear whether that will change during the inquest in the Lightfeather case, which is expected to last through Aug. 30.</p> <p><b>Inequities still abound</b></p> <p>One of the county's key changes to the system is providing for the first time legal representation to families who previously had to hire their own attorneys or go unrepresented during inquests.</p> <p>But these changes, intended to provide families with a voice in the process, have exposed new questions of equity and fairness.</p> <p>In the inquest in the Lyles case and the March review of <a href="#">19-year-old Damarius Butts'</a> 2017 shooting death, the officers' attorneys from top-tier Seattle defense firm Frey Buck billed the city more than \$450,000.</p> <p>The two Federal Way officers who shot Lightfeather at a car wash on Pacific Highway South after he reportedly threatened two men with a gun likewise have been provided counsel from a prestigious Seattle firm, the Christie Law Group, which specializes in police defense.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the attorney contracted through the state Department of Public Defense to represent Lightfeather's family, civil rights attorney Teri Rogers Kemp, is being paid a flat fee of \$6,000 to work the complex case, which entails significant briefing, several pretrial hearings, witness preparation and long days in trial.</p> <p>Sade Ada Smith, who contracts with King County as a conflict attorney to take clients who can't be represented by the public defender office, turned down a \$7,500 offer to represent a family in an upcoming inquest.</p>



“That is extremely low for the volume of work involved,” she said. “It probably turns out to less than minimum wage. It’s ridiculous.”

The Department of Public Defense in February issued a request for bids to represent families in upcoming cases, offering up to \$50,000 to qualified civil rights attorneys or lawyers with experience defending homicide cases who agree to handle two inquests.

However, as demonstrated by the contracts let to Kemp and offered to Smith, attorneys’ actual pay has proved to be significantly less than \$50,000.

A department spokesperson said Director Anita Khandelwal couldn’t comment on the contracts because “things are still in flux.”

Kemp, a solo practitioner involved in Seattle police reform for more than a decade, says she has an obligation to the cause and to Lightfeather’s family. She’s agreed to do three inquests for \$6,000 each, acknowledging she will put in far more time and effort than she’ll be paid for.

“I’ve done police accountability work for free for years,” she said. “I will continue to do so because I believe in it. But I do believe this is a tragedy and that it sends a message to the whole system that the families just don’t mean as much.”

Kemp’s contract has a provision for her to ask for additional funds if justified.

Seattle attorney Karen Kohler, an experienced civil litigator, agreed to represent Lyles’ family in the inquest without additional charge after negotiating a \$3.5 million settlement against the city in a wrongful-death lawsuit.

Kohler said the inquest was a “frustrating” experience and at first considered suggesting the family boycott the entire hearing, which she believed would be little more than a “formality” with a foregone conclusion.

The Lyles family had high expectations that the inquest might lead to criminal charges against the officers, even though the inquest jury, in reviewing the officers’ actions, would be asked to apply a police deadly force statute that [made it virtually impossible to charge an officer with homicide](#).

That statute was repealed in 2019. But inquests into nearly half of King County’s 56 fatal police encounters since 2017 will be conducted with jurors being asked to consider the deaths under the old statute, which was in effect at the time of 25 of the cases.

The county had touted the new process as more accessible and fair to families, and a [unanimous Washington Supreme Court had not only upheld the new process but expanded it](#) to allow juries to consider whether a police-related death resulted from “criminal means.” Expectations were high that inquest juries might hold officers criminally accountable when elected prosecutors had not.

Indeed, King County prosecutors had traditionally withheld final charging decisions in deaths at the hands of law enforcement until after inquests were held.

But with a backlog of 56 inquests — the result of legal challenges to the county’s efforts to revamp the process — and the prohibitive, since-repealed law governing roughly two dozen of the upcoming proceedings, Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg announced he was ending that practice after the Lyles hearing.

“It was very difficult to manage those expectation,” Koehler said. The jury’s findings, she said, “were very hard on the family.”

Chase Gallagher, a spokesperson for King County Executive Dow Constantine, said the county inquests were never intended to serve as an avenue to prosecution.

“We empathize with the families who must go through these tragedies of losing their loved one, and then relive the events during this process,” Gallagher said in a statement. “The inquest process is for transparency and fact finding. It has not been and is not where criminal charging decisions are made — that duty continues to rest with the [Prosecuting Attorney’s Office].

“An inquest helps governments determine if any policies, procedures or trainings need to be changed to prevent the tragedies that an inquest reviews,” he said.

### **Flawed process still serves the public, lawyers say**

Koehler has come to believe that the inquest process, flawed or not, serves a public purpose.

She also said she believes the county can improve the process: better explaining inquests to families, many of whom are low-income or from disenfranchised communities, and cutting back on police policy and administration witnesses, whose testimony is often self-serving.

The Lyles family, Koehler has said, was confronted with “an unflinching blue wall” of Seattle police officials who defended and justified the officers’ actions.

Koehler said she also believes there should be a mechanism to bring in outside experts to testify.

“Whenever you are able to force the government to answer for its actions, that is good,” she said.

King County is unique in Washington, in that its charter requires an inquest jury be convened for every death caused by law enforcement. Before the decision by Constantine to revise the system in 2018, critics complained for years that the process had wandered far from its original purpose, been blunted as an investigative tool and tilted hard in favor of law enforcement.

Inquests are administrative hearings, and jurors — rather than rendering a verdict — are asked to answer a series of questions that include whether a death was caused “by criminal means.”

Every other county in Washington has turned these duties over to a medical examiner.

Inequities in the King County system have long been obvious, and records indicate that despite dozens of controversial or questionable police killings, no inquest jury has found an officer’s actions illegal or unjustified since 1971, when an inquest jury determined the fatal shooting of a Black man, Leslie Allen Black, in the back by Seattle police Officer Robert Elmore was not justified. Elmore was charged with manslaughter, but was acquitted.

La Rond Baker, a civil rights attorney and former litigation specialist for the Department of Public Defense, coordinated that office’s initial response to the inquest policy revisions and represented Butts’ family during the first inquest called under the new procedures.

Like Koehler, she sees value in the process even if outcomes don’t change because an outdated legal standard still applies. Moreover, she said that once the inquests catch up to the new law, the process will be more relevant.

“It is a temporal problem,” said Baker, who now works as legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington. “Once we start hearing cases under the new legal standard for assessing the lawfulness of an officer-involved death, we will likely see a change in inquest outcomes. Juries will be asked different questions.”

Baker said that if one of her family members were killed by police, she would want an inquest held to examine the facts of the fatal encounter.

	<p>“I understand it is a struggle for a lot of people, but it can be helpful to have the evidence put forward in a way that is accessible to lay people and, most important, for them to be able to ask questions,” she said.</p> <p>“Yes, it is traumatic. But not as traumatic as losing a loved one and not knowing what happened.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Flash floods at national parks strand 200</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/21/us/zion-missing-hiker-flood.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/21/us/zion-missing-hiker-flood.html</a>
GIST	<p>One person who had been hiking Friday at a national park in Utah remained missing on Sunday and about 200 people at a national park in New Mexico were trapped for several hours on Saturday amid heavy rain and flash flooding in parts of the Southwest.</p> <p>At Zion National Park in Utah, a flash flood on Friday afternoon swept multiple hikers off their feet in the Narrows, a popular section of Zion canyon that requires wading in the Virgin River.</p> <p>At least one person was swept downstream and injured, and several others were able to find high ground and were rescued by emergency responders, <a href="#">the National Park Service said</a>.</p> <p>But later that evening, friends reported Jetal Agnihotri, 29, of Tucson, Ariz., missing. She has not returned from hiking in the Narrows, the Park Service said. Her brother, Pujan Agnihotri, <a href="#">told KSLTV</a> that his sister could not swim.</p> <p>Portions of the park remained closed on Sunday, according to its <a href="#">website</a>.</p> <p>On Saturday, in New Mexico, visitors at Carlsbad Caverns National Park were forced to shelter in place for more than nine hours because flooded roads became impassable, according to the Eddy County Office of Emergency Management.</p> <p>The authorities said that they responded to calls of visitors who attempted to cross streams and became stuck in their cars. Noting that water just a foot high can sweep away vehicles, emergency responders on <a href="#">Facebook</a> repeated the mantra of the weekend to drivers: “Turn around, don’t drown.”</p> <p>Jennifer Armendariz, the emergency manager for Eddy County, said officials had conducted a few rescues, including for a family whose vehicle had turned on its side and a couple stranded on the roof of their car. No injuries were reported.</p> <p>Ms. Armendariz said educating the public about not crossing streams in vehicles during a flood was a constant challenge. Though water may not always look deep, it’s “not worth the risk of trying to cross,” she said, adding that a man in the county had died last year in such a situation.</p> <p>“I believe it was a Jeep of some sort that was a little lifted off the ground so he felt he was above the water enough to be able to pass through it,” she said. “Unfortunately, it picked up the vehicle and took him.”</p> <p>An order to shelter in place at Carlsbad Caverns was lifted late on Saturday, and about 200 visitors and staff members were evacuated, she said. On Sunday, crews began clearing debris from the roadway.</p> <p>Monsoonal moisture is contributing to more frequent showers and thunderstorms, the National Weather Services in Utah and New Mexico said. A monsoon is a seasonal change in winds that can result in increasing humidity levels over land, triggering more frequent storms, <a href="#">according to the Weather Service</a>.</p> <p>From the Southern Plains into the lower Mississippi River Valley, heavy rains were expected to continue into the week, with a continued threat of flash flooding, the <a href="#">National Weather Service said</a>.</p>

	<p>On Sunday, more than 100,000 people in the United States were under flash flood watches, according to <a href="#">Weather Service data</a>.</p> <p>National parks in southern Utah remained under elevated risk of flash flooding on Sunday, the <a href="#">Weather Service in Salt Lake City</a> said.</p> <p>Flash floods do not only occur in areas near bodies of water. They can surge anywhere that experiences intense rainfall over a brief period of time. As the climate warms, researchers expect that <a href="#">flash floods will increase and get “flashier,”</a> resulting in shorter but more intense flooding.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/22 Day 180 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/22/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-180-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/22/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-180-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ukraine is bracing itself for an <a href="#">intensification of Russian missile attacks</a> to coincide with its independence day</b> on Wednesday. The country’s military warned that Russia had put five cruise missile-bearing warships and submarines out in the Black Sea and that Moscow was positioning air defence systems in Belarus. Large gatherings have been banned in Kyiv for four days from Monday. Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelenskiy warned that “Russia may <a href="#">try to do something particularly</a> ugly, something particularly vicious” this week as the country celebrates its 31st anniversary of independence.</li> <li>• <b>Artillery shells rained down on the Ukrainian city of Nikopol</b>, close to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, overnight. Nikopol was shelled on five different occasions, regional governor Valentyn Reznichenko wrote on Telegram. He said 25 artillery shells hit the city, causing a fire at an industrial premises and cutting power to 3,000 people.</li> <li>• <b>Russian missiles hit targets near Odesa</b>, Ukrainian officials said. Five Russian Kalibr cruise missiles were fired from the Black Sea at the region overnight, the regional administration spokesperson said, citing information from the southern military command. Two were shot down by Ukrainian air defences and three hit agricultural targets, but there were no casualties. <a href="#">Russia</a> said on Sunday the missiles had destroyed an ammunition depot containing missiles for US-made Himars rockets, while Kyiv said a granary had been hit.</li> <li>• <b>The daughter of an ultranationalist Russian ideologue and ally of Vladimir Putin was <a href="#">killed in a car bomb</a></b> on the outskirts of Moscow on Saturday night. Darya Dugina, whose father is the Russian political commentator Alexander Dugin, died when the Toyota Land Cruiser she was driving was ripped apart by a powerful explosion about 12 miles (20km) west of the capital near the village of Bolshiye Vyazemy at about 9.30pm local time (1930 BST), according to investigators.</li> <li>• <b>A former member of Russia’s Duma has claimed that <a href="#">Russian partisans were allegedly behind the car bomb attack</a></b>. <a href="#">Ilya Ponomarev</a>, who was expelled for anti-Kremlin activities, alleged the explosion was the work of the National Republican Army, which he claimed was an underground group working inside Russia and dedicated to overthrowing the Putin regime. “This attack opens a new page in Russian resistance to Putinism,” he said.</li> <li>• <b>Zelenskiy warned Russia against putting Ukrainian soldiers captured during the siege of Mariupol on trial</b>. “If this despicable court takes place, if our people are brought into these settings in violation of all agreements, all international rules, there will be abuse,” he said in a Sunday evening address. “This will be the line beyond which no negotiations are possible.”</li> <li>• <b>The leaders of Britain, France, Germany and the US urged military restraint around the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in <a href="#">Ukraine</a></b>. In a phone call, the four leaders also called for a “quick visit” to the nuclear site by independent inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s spokesperson.</li> <li>• <b>Four more ships carrying food left Ukraine’s ports</b>, Turkey’s defence ministry said, bringing the total number of vessels to leave Ukraine’s Black Sea ports under a UN-brokered grain export deal to 31.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	08/21 Ukraine strikes psychological blows Crimea
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/21/ukraine-strikes-psychological-blows-game-of-drones-crimea">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/21/ukraine-strikes-psychological-blows-game-of-drones-crimea</a>
GIST	<p>For the second time in less than a month, Russia's naval base at Sevastopol <a href="#">has come under a drone attack</a>. Plumes of smoke were seen rising after the incident on Saturday morning, which the Russian-appointed governor of the city, Mikhail Razvozhaev, said came after a drone flew over the sensitive military site.</p> <p>In narrow military terms the attack is not significant. Razvozhaev said it involved a single drone. <a href="#">Footage from a local Telegram channel</a> appears to back that up. But a key question is how a drone was able to evade Russian electronic warfare defences and fly right over the naval base.</p> <p>What sounds like small arms fire, not air defence systems, can be heard on <a href="#">some of the videos</a> and the drone may have been shot down before delivering a payload. Razvozhaev said initially the drone had not been hit, before saying it was. At the very least, though, it is embarrassing for Russia, which is struggling to show it can defend what it considers its own back yard.</p> <p>Experts such as Justin Bronk from the Royal United Services Institute thinktank suggest the drone in the film could have been a commercially available Chinese-made model, <a href="#">the \$9,500 (£8,030) Mugin-5</a>, or a copy of it. It has a flying time of up to seven hours, the manufacturers say, and a top speed of 150 km/h (95mph) and could have been adapted to carry an improvised warhead. The payload, the manufacturers say, is 15 to 20 kilograms.</p> <p>The drone may also have been simply engaged in reconnaissance, although the growing evidence of a pattern of drone strikes deep behind the frontline in Crimea and elsewhere suggests something different. Russia said the same naval base was hit by a drone strike <a href="#">at the end of July</a>, wounding five people, making the fact that defences were not tightened all the more remarkable.</p> <p>A video, originally <a href="#">from a Russian military blogger</a>, showed a similar-looking aircraft being used in a kamikaze strike on an oil refinery at Novoshakhtinsk, inside Russian territory near Rostov, just across the border from occupied Donetsk. The similarity is unlikely to be a coincidence.</p> <p>Ukraine continues to decline to take formal responsibility for such attacks, though it does do so sometimes in private. In public the country's leaders prefer to make knowing comments that are not always subtle. Take Volodymyr Zelenskiy's statement overnight: "This year, one can literally feel in the air of Crimea that the occupation there is temporary, and <a href="#">Ukraine</a> is returning."</p> <p>The suggestion is that Ukraine has evolved a new method of attack, aimed at sowing "chaos within Russian forces", as the key Zelenskiy adviser Mykhailo Podolyak <a href="#">told the Guardian</a> last week. Some experts believe drones operated by special forces were responsible for the <a href="#">dramatic attack on the Saky airbase</a>, where about nine combat planes that supported Russia's Black Sea fleet were destroyed.</p> <p>In any event, such drone strikes will have a practical effect. The Institute for the Study of War said "Russian occupation officials in Crimea are likely considering strengthening security on the peninsula" and that "such measures may draw Russian security forces away from the frontlines".</p> <p>But the critical point is the psychological impact. Repeatedly captured on video, they demonstrate that Crimea and similar behind-the-lines locations are not safe, bringing the conflict closer to Russia and the occupied territories, while at the same time being focused (at least so far) on military and industrial targets.</p> <p>A string of social media videos show traffic jams on roads out of the Crimean peninsula, including <a href="#">at least one released on Saturday</a>, suggesting Russians who moved into the territory after it was occupied and annexed in 2014 no longer consider it safe. Others <a href="#">show traffic jams</a> out of Sevastopol to Yalta.</p> <p>If that is the effect of a handful of drone strikes, Ukraine will consider the effort justified. No wonder Razvozhaev told Russians in Sevastopol that it was time to fight the propaganda war better as he appealed for everyone to remain calm because the local air defence system was now working. "Upload videos with the work of our air defence systems," he said.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Sierra Leone 'explosion of violence'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/aug/21/sierra-leone-protests-inflation-cost-of-living">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/aug/21/sierra-leone-protests-inflation-cost-of-living</a>
GIST	<p>As workers cleared broken glass from the shattered windows of Mohamed Sillah's restaurant in Freetown, he described the events of last week, when <a href="#">rare protests against soaring inflation and the rising cost of living</a> shook the capital of Sierra Leone.</p> <p>"It was an explosion of violence," Sillah said of the damage inflicted on his and other buildings. "We don't usually see this in <a href="#">Sierra Leone</a> but we are in tough times."</p> <p>Businesses, government offices and buses across eastern Freetown were charred or destroyed completely in the violence as police and security officials brutally cracked down on demonstrators. At least 21 protesters and six officers were killed. <a href="#">A video verified by Reuters</a> shows police firing live ammunition into the crowds.</p> <p>Protests are usually restricted in the tiny west African country, where most of the country's 8 million people live in poverty. But <a href="#">like many other African countries</a> Sierra Leone has been particularly badly affected by rapid inflation caused in part by the war in Ukraine. And it was the dire economic situation that brought people out on to the streets.</p> <p>In the week following the protests, police and army convoys patrolled the busy commercial streets in the districts of Rokupa, Makeni and Kamakwie where Freetown's protests took place. A tense calm settled, with ordinary life gradually returning.</p> <p>The government has partly blamed the opposition for the protests, branding them an attempted coup, and launching an inquiry into alleged organisers. However, protesters interviewed by local media described their movement as "faceless" rather than orchestrated by one group, and reflective of widespread discontent.</p> <p>President Julius Bio dismissed the idea that the protests were reflective of public anger. "This was not a protest against the high cost of living occasioned by the ongoing global economic crisis," he said. "The chant of the insurrectionists was for a violent overthrow of the democratically elected government."</p> <p>But on the ground it is clear that many people shared the protesters' grievances.</p> <p>Inflation rose to almost 28% in June, fuelled first by the Covid pandemic easing and then the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Food inflation is at the highest level in decades, almost doubling since September 2021.</p> <p>In recent months doctors and teachers have gone on strike, with demands for pay increases to meet rising inflation.</p> <p>At a market in Western Rural, traders who asked not to be named lamented how the prices of rice, onions, tomatoes and beef had all risen by about 50% over the last year, with the price of fuel and palm oil roughly doubling.</p> <p>Marcella Samba-Sesay, the director of Campaign for Good Governance, a civil society group, said that the government had not clearly articulated to the majority of people why the economic challenges had worsened.</p> <p>"There is an information gap in the country where the government's message doesn't reach many people. They have not effectively communicated to people why things are getting bad and that is making people angrier," she said.</p>



	<p>Anger has also been rising over the authorities' refusal to permit protests. Under the terms of a public order act adopted in 1965 during colonial rule, protest organisers usually have to ask the police for permission to protest.</p> <p>"But most of the time, when the issues are political, the police will say no," said Samba-Sesay. "So people who want to come out and protest have not been given the permission to do so."</p> <p>In July, hundreds of women working in markets protested in Freetown, condemning the government's handling of the economy. Many shops and stalls closed in support of the demonstrations. Dozens of women were arrested by police. Several alleged they had been beaten and sexually abused by officers.</p> <p>"People are really suffering, and feel the government is not responding or allowing them to have a voice," Semba-Sesay said. "We need people to be able to channel grievances through legitimate means."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Droughts hurt world's largest economies</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/droughts-hurt-worlds-largest-economies-11661087554?mod=hp_lead_pos9">https://www.wsj.com/articles/droughts-hurt-worlds-largest-economies-11661087554?mod=hp_lead_pos9</a>
GIST	<p>Severe droughts across the Northern Hemisphere—stretching from the <a href="#">farms of California</a> to waterways in Europe and China—are further snarling supply chains and driving up the prices of food and energy, adding pressure to a global trade system already under stress.</p> <p>Parts of China are experiencing their longest sustained heat wave since record-keeping began in 1961, according to China's National Climate Center, leading to manufacturing shutdowns owing to lack of hydropower. The drought affecting Spain, Portugal, France and Italy is on track to be the worst in 500 years, according to Andrea Toreti, a climate scientist at the European Commission's Joint Research Center.</p> <p>In the American West, <a href="#">a drought</a> that began two decades ago now appears to be the worst in 1,200 years, according to a study led by the University of California, Los Angeles.</p> <p>Researchers compare droughts by measuring the growth of annual tree rings that reflect rainfall and temperature from year to year in specific areas. Climate scientists say this year's dry spells are partly because of La Niña, a cyclical pattern of cooler water in the eastern Pacific Ocean that pushes the atmospheric jet stream northward, leaving parts of Europe, the U.S. and Asia with less rain. The United Nations says the number of droughts worldwide has risen 29% since 2000 because of land degradation and climate change.</p> <p>For some of the world's biggest economies, this summer's droughts are hurting industries including electricity generation, agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. That is compounding existing strains such as supply-chain disruptions stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic and pressure on energy and food prices from the <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a>.</p> <p>In the U.S., agricultural forecasters expect farmers to lose more than 40% of <a href="#">the cotton crop</a>, while in Europe the Spanish <a href="#">olive-oil harvest</a> is expected to fall by as much as a third amid hot and dry conditions.</p> <p>In Europe, rivers such as the Rhine and Italy's Po that serve as arteries for trade are <a href="#">running at historic lows</a>, forcing manufacturers to cut shipments. Falling river levels also have reduced hydropower generation across the continent, affecting a key alternative source to natural gas, which is in shorter supply as <a href="#">Russia squeezes flows</a>.</p> <p>Heat has forced France to lower production at several nuclear reactors because the river water that cools them is too warm. And Germany, Europe's biggest consumer of Russian gas, plans to <a href="#">burn more coal instead of gas</a> to generate electricity, but low levels on the Rhine are holding back shipments.</p>



Meager snowfall at the river's source in the Swiss Alps and reduced rainfall downstream have lowered water flow in the Rhine Delta in the Netherlands. That has allowed seawater into the country's system of locks and dams, slowing river traffic and seeping into reservoirs used for drinking and agriculture. Drought is drying out and weakening earthen dikes that protect low-lying areas of the Netherlands from the North Sea.

Eleven inches of rain had fallen in much of the country this year by early August compared with the usual 16, leaving the Rhine so low in places that it is snarling exports from German manufacturers clustered upriver.

"Everything is hurting Germany more than anywhere else, that's a common theme," said Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at Capital Economics in London.

In the U.S., smaller snowpacks in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California have sharply reduced water supplies in the region, home to the country's largest agriculture industry. Officials of the Westlands Water District in the Central Valley, the state's most important agricultural region, say roughly a third of the 600,000 farmland acres there are being left unplanted this year because of water shortages.

The Colorado River has fallen so much that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on Aug. 16 declared a second consecutive annual shortage, triggering a second straight year of mandatory water cuts to Arizona, Nevada and Mexico.

In Yuma County, Ariz., a major producer of lettuce, baby greens and other vegetables, farmers expect a hit of as much as 10% to their \$3.4 billion-a-year industry, said Wade Noble, general counsel for four irrigation districts there.

"It's less income into the area," Mr. Noble said. "It's less buying and selling."

In central and southwestern China, [authorities declared a drought](#) in six provincial-level jurisdictions, which together accounted for a fourth of China's grain output last year.

The southwestern province of Sichuan has been hit the hardest by lower rainfall, as it relies heavily on hydropower for electricity. Soaring temperatures have driven up demand for air conditioning, threatening to overload the power grid.

On Sunday, local authorities activated the highest emergency response amid the power-supply crunch, extending an order from last week to many factories to shut down or scale back production to "leave electricity for the residents" until Thursday, when temperatures are expected to drop again.

The restrictions, while limited, have affected a number of global manufacturers such as Apple Inc. device maker Foxconn Technology Co. Ltd., Volkswagen AG and Toyota Motor Corp., as well as manufacturers of lithium salts, fertilizers and photovoltaic equipment with production sites in Sichuan. Tesla Inc. has [asked Shanghai's government](#) to help ensure its suppliers there would have sufficient electricity supply amid a power crunch, saying 16 of them weren't able to produce at full capacity, according to a government letter and people familiar with the matter.

Water levels along some sections of the Yangtze, China's longest river and a crucial source of hydropower, transport and water for crops, have fallen to their lowest since record-keeping began, according to China's Ministry of Water Resources. At Hankou, in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, water levels on Thursday stood at the equivalent of about 15.6 feet, less than half the historical average, according to the Yangtze Maritime Safety Administration.

American and European climate scientists say global warming has amplified the severity of the effect of La Niña. A warmer atmosphere sucks up more moisture from land, increasing the risk of drought, said Isla Simpson, a climate scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo.

	<p>La Niña episodes typically last nine to 12 months, but this one is in its second year and is expected to last until at least February 2023, according to a <a href="#">recent advisory issued</a> by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.</p> <p>The impact of extended drought and heat waves on sectors such as tourism, manufacturing and agriculture could become a long-term drag on the credit ratings of governments across Southern Europe, according to Moody's Investors Service. The latest U.N. climate-science report says global warming has raised the risk of drought across the Mediterranean region.</p> <p>"If it becomes the norm that July, August are unbearable in parts of Europe, then companies and people are likely to react to that," said Marie Diron, managing director of sovereign credit at Moody's in London.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/21 Serbia warns NATO on Kosovo Serbs</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/serbia-warns-protect-kosovo-serbs-nato-88659772">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/serbia-warns-protect-kosovo-serbs-nato-88659772</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BELGRADE, Serbia -- Serbia's president called on NATO on Sunday to "do their job" in Kosovo or he says Serbia itself will move to protect its minority in the breakaway province.</p> <p>The fiery televised address to his nation by President Aleksandar Vucic followed the collapse of political talks between Serbian and Kosovo leaders earlier this week mediated by the European Union in Brussels.</p> <p>Serbia, along with its allies Russia and China, has refused to recognize Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence. A NATO-led intervention in 1999 ended the war between Serbian forces and separatists in Kosovo and stopped Belgrade's bloody crackdown against Kosovo's majority Albanians.</p> <p>The EU has overseen years of unsuccessful talks to normalize their ties, saying that's one of the main preconditions for Kosovo and Serbia's eventual membership in the 27-nation bloc.</p> <p>"We have nowhere to go, we are cornered," Vucic said. "We will save our people from persecution and pogroms, if NATO does not want to do it."</p> <p>He also claimed that Kosovo Albanian "gangs" need to be stopped from crossing into northern Kosovo, where most of the Kosovo Serbs live. He offered no proof for the claim.</p> <p>There are widespread fears in the West that Russia could encourage its ally Serbia into an armed intervention in northern Kosovo that would further destabilize the Balkans and shift at least some world and NATO attention from Russia's war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Nearly 4,000 NATO-led peacekeepers have been stationed in Kosovo following the 1998-99 war and any armed intervention there by Serbia or Russia would mean a major escalation of a simmering conflict in Europe.</p> <p>Following the collapse of the EU-mediated talks, NATO peacekeeping troops in Kosovo have been deployed at main roads in its north, saying they are ready to protect the freedom of movement for all sides.</p> <p>Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo soared anew last month when the Kosovo government led by Prime Minister Albin Kurti declared that Serbian identity documents and vehicle license plates would no longer be valid in Kosovo's territory. Serbia has been implementing the same measures for Kosovo citizens crossing into Serbia for the past 10 years.</p> <p>Minority Serbs in Kosovo reacted with anger to the proposed changes, putting up roadblocks, sounding air raid sirens and firing guns into the air and in the direction of Kosovo police officers. No one was injured.</p> <p>Under apparent pressure from the West, Kurti postponed implementation of the measure for a month to Sept. 1, when more trouble is expected if a compromise is not reached by then.</p>

	<p>Vucic said Serbia will “work hard” to reach a “compromise solution in the next 10 days” and accused the Kosovo leadership of “only being interested in abolishing any trace of the Serbian state in Kosovo.”</p> <p>Vucic also claimed, again without proof, that Kosovo's government wanted “the final removal of the Serbian people from Kosovo” — something that has been repeatedly denied by Kosovo officials.</p> <p>Kosovo Interior Minister Xhelal Svecla on Sunday visited Kosovo police units stationed near the northern border with Serbia, saying that he hopes there will be no trouble when the new measures begin on Sept. 1.</p> <p>“Our common interest here is that this land is ours and we will not give it up at any price,” he said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/22 Indiana governor in Taiwan; economic visit</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/indiana-governor-taiwan-high-profile-us-visits-88676648">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/indiana-governor-taiwan-high-profile-us-visits-88676648</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan -- Indiana's Republican governor met with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen Monday morning, following two recent high-profile visits by U.S. politicians that drew China's ire and Chinese military drills that included firing missiles over the island.</p> <p>Gov. Eric Holcomb arrived Sunday evening in Taiwan for a four-day visit that will focus on economic exchange, particularly semiconductors, according to a statement from his office.</p> <p>His visit is coming at a tense moment for Taiwan, China and the U.S. after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan earlier this month. China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and views exchanges with foreign governments as an infringement on its claims.</p> <p>Tsai acknowledged the tensions in her opening remarks ahead of their meeting Monday morning and welcomed further exchanges.</p> <p>“In the midst of this, Taiwan has been confronted by military threats from China, in and around the Taiwan Strait. At this moment, democratic allies must stand together and boost cooperation in all areas,” Tsai said. “Building on our existing foundation of collaboration, I look forward to our supporting one another, and advancing hand in hand, forging closer relations and creating even deeper cooperation.”</p> <p>In response to Pelosi's visit, China's military held several days of exercises that included warplanes flying toward the island and warships sailing across the midline of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial buffer between the island and mainland.</p> <p>China also imposed visa bans and other sanctions on several Taiwanese political figures, though it's unclear what effect the sanctions would have.</p> <p>Holcomb emphasized the economic nature of his visit, mentioning that the state is among the top in the U.S. for direct foreign investment and was home to 10 Taiwanese companies. “We both seek to deepen and enhance our already excellent cooperation that we've established over the years,” he said.</p> <p>Holcomb will also meet representatives of the semiconductor industry, and is expected to promote academic and tech cooperation between Taiwan and the state of Indiana. The delegation is meeting with National Yang-Ming University and National Cheng Kung University as part of the exchange.</p> <p>He is traveling with officials from the state's economic development council, as well as the dean of engineering at Purdue University, an institution which has just established a semiconductors degree program. He will visit South Korea next.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/21 Firestorm: teacher contract race language</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/minneapolis-teacher-contract-race-language-ignites-firestorm-88657548">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/minneapolis-teacher-contract-race-language-ignites-firestorm-88657548</a>
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS -- When Minneapolis teachers settled a 14-day strike in March, they celebrated a groundbreaking provision in their new contract that was meant to shield teachers of color from seniority-based layoffs and help ensure that students from racial minorities have teachers who look like them.</p> <p>Months later, conservative media outlets have erupted with denunciations of the policy as racist and unconstitutional discrimination against white educators. One legal group is looking to recruit teachers and taxpayers willing to sue to throw out the language. The teachers union paints the dispute as a ginned-up controversy when there's no imminent danger of anyone losing their job. Meanwhile, the feud is unfolding just months ahead of arguments in a pair of U.S. Supreme Court cases that could reshape affirmative action.</p> <p>"The same people who want to take down teachers unions and blame seniority are now defending it for white people," said Greta Callahan, president of the teachers unit at the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers. "This is all made up by the right wing now. And we could not be more proud of this language."</p> <p>Recent coverage in conservative platforms such as the local news website Alpha News, Fox News nationally and the Daily Mail internationally sparked criticisms from prominent figures, including Donald Trump Jr. and former Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, who curbed the power of public employee unions in his state. Walker on Twitter called it "another example of why government unions should be eliminated."</p> <p>The contract language doesn't specifically say that white teachers would be laid off ahead of teachers of color, though critics say that's what the effect would be. The contract exempts "teachers who are members of populations underrepresented among licensed teachers in the District," as well as alumni of historically Black and Hispanic colleges, and of tribal colleges. Around 60% of the district's teachers are white, while more than 60% of the students are from racial minorities.</p> <p>Advocates say students from racial minorities perform better when their educators include teachers and support staff of color, and that it's especially critical in a district that suffers from stubborn achievement gaps. Callahan said her union fought for years to get the protection added to their contract, and that she knows of two other Minnesota districts with similar provisions.</p> <p>Minneapolis is one of many districts across the U.S. struggling with declining teacher headcounts and tight budgets. But Callahan disputed that the provision threatens anyone's job, noting that Minneapolis has nearly 300 unfilled positions as teachers and students prepare to go back to school, and the language won't take effect until the 2023 academic year.</p> <p>Callahan called it "just one teensy, tiny step towards equity" that doesn't begin to make up for many teachers of color quitting the district in recent years because they felt underpaid and disrespected.</p> <p>To Lindsey West, a fifth grade teacher at Clara Barton Community School who identifies as Black and Indigenous, the seniority language is one piece of a bigger mission of improving education.</p> <p>West said she feels strongly that students of color benefit from having teachers that look like them, but said she's also seen that diversity can be empowering for white students. She said she's sometimes been the first educator of color that Black or white students have had.</p> <p>"We want to have kids from all demographics having experiences with people of different backgrounds and different cultures, and becoming aware that our shared humanity is what's important, and not the things that divide us," West said.</p> <p>Minneapolis Public Schools interim Superintendent Rochelle Cox declined a request for an interview.</p> <p>"The object of this provision is clearly to lay off white teachers first, regardless of merit, based on the color of their skin, and that is a big problem under the Constitution and the 14th Amendment," said James</p>

Dickey, senior trial counsel at the Upper Midwest Law Center, a conservative nonprofit that often takes on public employee unions. It has brought litigation over such issues as COVID-19 mask mandates and displays of Black Lives Matter posters.

Dickey said his group is considering suing and has had a flood of Minneapolis taxpayers — and some teachers — contact them to say they are “offended that my tax dollars could go to fund this kind of racist agenda.”

He argued that a 1986 U.S. Supreme Court decision known as the Wygant case bars such provisions and would serve as a precedent in Minnesota.

The Wygant case involved a teachers contract in Jackson, Michigan, which took a different approach from the Minneapolis agreement. It effectively said Jackson could not make cuts that led to an overall reduction in the percentage of minority personnel employed in the district. White teachers sued after being laid off while some teachers of color with less seniority kept their jobs. A divided Supreme Court held that the layoffs violated the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Andrew Crook, spokesman for the American Federation of Teachers, said he didn't know of anything similar to the Minneapolis wording in contracts in other states, though he said some contracts provide exceptions from straight seniority rules for teachers in hard-to-fill specialties such as math and special education.

Officials with other national public employee unions and professional associations either said they didn't know of anything similar in their fields or did not respond to requests for comment.

Two affirmative action cases set for oral arguments before the Supreme Court in October, involving Harvard University and the University of North Carolina, could have a bearing on the Minneapolis dispute. The cases are challenges to the consideration of race in college admission decisions.

Affirmative action has been reviewed by the high court several times over the past 40 years and has generally been upheld, but with limits. With three new conservative justices on the court since its last review, however, the practice may be facing its greatest threat yet.

Joseph Daly, a professor emeritus at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law who arbitrates disputes across the country, including many teacher cases over the years, said the Minneapolis language appears designed to survive a court challenge.

“The U.S. Supreme Court in the past has OK'd affirmative action when there were very valid objectives to be achieved in ultimately seeking equality for all human beings,” Daly said. “Now the question of today is: Will this concept be upheld by the courts in light of the more conservative stance on the Supreme Court? I don't have an answer on that.”

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HEADLINE	08/19 DOT: 'unacceptable' 24% flights delayed
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/news/what-a-new-crackdown-on-airlines-could-mean-to-travelers/ar-AA10QCUo">https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/news/what-a-new-crackdown-on-airlines-could-mean-to-travelers/ar-AA10QCUo</a>
GIST	<p>U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told airlines this week that passengers are still seeing an “unacceptable” number of disruptions this summer, and he’s pushing carriers to better take care of travelers when flights are canceled and delayed.</p> <p>The letter sent to airline CEOs said that <a href="#">3.2% of flights had been canceled through the first six months of the year and 24% delayed</a>. Complaints are still worse than they were pre-pandemic, too.</p>

“As we approach an increase in air travel for the Labor Day holiday, I want to reiterate what you have heard me say often: Americans expect when they purchase an airline ticket they will arrive at their destination safely, reliably and affordably,” said Buttigieg’s letter to airline CEOs.

Here’s what the Department of Transportation is pushing airlines to do to better care for passengers [amid heightened disruptions](#).

### **A new web portal for disrupted passengers**

Buttigieg said the DOT is planning to launch an “interactive dashboard” for air passengers to access information on federal rules to protect passengers and the policies of each airline.

The dashboard is set to launch Sept. 2 on the Transportation Department’s aviation consumer protection website. It also will have links to each airline’s website for customers to find the information on their own.

### **Meals and hotels**

When flights are delayed for long stretches, passengers often have to cover the costs of food and hotels, potentially adding hundreds in expenses to trips. Airlines sometimes give meal or hotel vouchers if delays are their fault, but what is their fault is often up for debate.

For instance, if there is a storm in Orlando, Fla., and pilots are delayed in getting to their next flight, that’s often blamed on weather, and compensation is denied.

Right now, there are [no federal rules or laws that require airlines to compensate passengers](#). Passengers can only seek refunds for cancellations.

Buttigieg said the DOT is contemplating new rules “that would further expand the rights of airline passengers who experience disruptions.”

“I urge you to take this opportunity to assess your Customer Service Plan to ensure that it guarantees adequate amenities and services to help passengers with expenses and inconveniences due to delays and cancellations,” the letter said. “The department asks that airlines, at a minimum, provide meal vouchers for delays of three hours or more and lodging accommodations for passengers who must wait overnight at an airport because of disruptions within the carrier’s control.”

That also could mean airlines would pick up added costs such as clothing, taxis or cruise penalties after a flight is late or luggage is delayed.

### **Better access to customer service**

During large cancellation events, passengers often are stuck waiting in massive lines at the airport trying to rebook flights or find hotels. That’s because when one flight is canceled, usually many more are as well. Phone banks also often have long queues.

Buttigieg wants that fixed.

“Regardless of the cause of the delays or cancellations, the department expects airlines to provide timely and responsive customer service during and after periods of flight disruptions,” the letter said.

### **Better refund policies**

The chastising letter comes just two weeks after [transportation officials announced that they would strengthen protections for travelers seeking airfare refunds](#).

Those changes are working their way through the rulemaking process and could require airlines to provide refunds if flights are delayed more than three hours, if arrival and departure airports are changed, or if airlines increase the number of connections.



It also would require passengers to be compensated if the type of aircraft they are flying on is downgraded or if upgrades, such as first-class travel, are no longer available.

Until now, definitions of delays and cancellations have been vague, giving the airlines wiggle room to avoid or delay giving refunds.

#### **What the airlines say**

Airlines declined to comment on the new rules, but the trade group for major airlines, Airlines for America, said that its member carriers “comply with federal laws and regulations regarding cash refunds” and that they “strive to provide the highest level of customer service and look forward to working with the DOT to continue providing transparency for the traveling public,” said spokeswoman Hannah Evans.

The trade group said [airlines gave out \\$21 billion in cash refunds in 2020 and 2021](#) even though many people, and [the DOT](#), [complained that airlines were creating barriers to passengers getting refunds](#).

Airlines also have pointed some blame at the federal government, particularly for shortages of air traffic controllers that have led to problems in Florida, New York and elsewhere. DOT data shows that [63% of flight delays and cancellations during the first five months of 2022 were caused by weather and national air system congestion](#).

Buttigieg did compliment airlines in his letter for [reducing schedules this summer and fall](#) to make flights more reliable.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Monkeypox cases double in Los Angeles</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://news.yahoo.com/monkeypox-cases-more-double-l-174325038.html">https://news.yahoo.com/monkeypox-cases-more-double-l-174325038.html</a>
GIST	<p>The number of cumulative monkeypox cases has more than doubled in Los Angeles County in the last two weeks as officials race to better track the virus and more widely vaccinate more vulnerable communities.</p> <p>There have been 1,105 cumulative monkeypox cases reported countywide as of Friday, according to data from the Department of Public Health. As of this week, that total includes the region's first cases in a jail and in a homeless shelter, according to health officer Dr. Muntu Davis. The median age of people with confirmed monkeypox cases in L.A. County is 35.</p> <p>Nearly half the county's cases for which geographic information is available have been reported in the health service planning area for the central part of the county, which includes West Hollywood, Hollywood, downtown Los Angeles, Eagle Rock, Highland Park, Echo Park, Silver Lake, Los Feliz and Boyle Heights. About 12% of the county's residents live in this region.</p> <p>About 15% of L.A. County's monkeypox cases are in an area that includes the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys, county health data show. Roughly 22% of county residents live in that region.</p> <p>The Antelope and San Gabriel valleys have reported the fewest cases.</p> <p>The disease — characterized by a rash and lesions that can look like pimples, bumps or blisters — primarily spreads through prolonged skin-to-skin contact with those lesions, which may be in hard-to-see places or mistaken for other skin issues. The lesions can appear first in the genital area and rectum before spreading to other parts of the body.</p> <p>"Although cases are increasing in Los Angeles County, the risk of infection in the general population continues to remain very low," Davis said during a briefing Thursday.</p> <p>About 98% of cases for which there is gender identity information available are among males, county figures show. And 98% of cases for which sexual orientation is known are among people who identify as gay or bisexual, Davis said.</p>



Although the disease can be quite painful, it is rarely fatal. Globally, there have been five deaths in the outbreak, none of which have been in the U.S.

“I want to reiterate that we continue to approach this outbreak with the utmost urgency to slow its spreading in California,” Dr. Tomás Aragón, California's public health director and health officer, said Friday.

Wastewater testing, which continues to prove useful in estimating the spread of the coronavirus, is also now being employed to track monkeypox.

In late June — about a month after the first California case was confirmed — monkeypox DNA was detected in wastewater in San Francisco, according to the WastewaterSCAN coalition, a group of scientists who have been testing sewage for the coronavirus since 2020.

“It helps understand how widespread this is,” said Stanford civil and environmental engineering professor Alexandria Boehm, one of the lead researchers on the WastewaterSCAN team.

The monkeypox virus also has been detected in L.A. County wastewater. Samples from the Joint Water Pollution Plant in Carson, which serves about 4 million residents and businesses in southern and eastern L.A. County, showed a small presence on July 31 and for three days during the first week in August, according to WastewaterSCAN data. The virus has not been detected there since, despite the rising case rates in the county.

By comparison, monkeypox DNA has been detected almost every day since June 27 at two wastewater facilities in San Francisco — and at much higher levels than in L.A. County.

Still, Boehm said that doesn't mean there's not more monkeypox in Los Angeles County; it's just been difficult to detect among the massive sample size.

Because the L.A. County wastewater facility serves such a large number of people “you have to think about the sensitivity of detecting monkeypox relative to the incident rate in the population,” Boehm said. “Just because you don't detect monkeypox, doesn't mean there's nobody [in that waste watershed] with monkeypox.”

It is not immediately clear whether the L.A. County Department of Public Health plans to expand monkeypox testing in wastewater. The county has been monitoring wastewater for the coronavirus for months, including at the Joint Water Pollution Plant, as well as at the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant in Playa del Rey and facilities near Lancaster and Malibu.

“It will take some time to look and assess the correlations between the concentrations and the case counts. ... [But] we're excited to be part of a larger group that's figuring out how to best use the wastewater data,” L.A. County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said.

As of last week, L.A. County had received more than 43,000 doses of the Jynneos monkeypox vaccine. Nearly all — 91% — of those have already been administered, with the county offering second doses of the two-shot series for the first time this week. People are eligible for their second shot 28 days after their first dose and are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose.

An additional 29,000 doses of the vaccine have just been received, Davis said Thursday. The latest vaccines will be used in the new method of administering doses intradermally — between layers of skin — instead of subcutaneously, in which the shot is injected in the fat beneath the skin. The new strategy allows each dose to now be one-fifth the volume of the originally sized doses, thus stretching the limited supplies.

People eligible for the monkeypox vaccine in L.A. County include gay or bisexual men and transgender people who have had multiple or anonymous sex partners in the last 14 days. Residents who are

immunocompromised, including those with advanced or controlled HIV infection, are being prioritized for the immunization.

Prior data from Africa suggest the Jynneos vaccine is at least 85% effective in preventing monkeypox. Because the vaccine is not 100% effective, health officials still advise taking measures to lessen infection risk. But should infection still occur, "hopefully, it will make the infection less severe," Davis said.

Aragón said the state has positioned close to 3,000 oral and 345 IV versions of Tpoxx treatments. Vaccines are being distributed in communities based on the number of cases reported by a county, he said.

He noted that the trendline in cases will start to flatten or decrease when the virus "has trouble finding susceptible people to infect." That could happen by people developing immunity through vaccination or prior infection, or if they "change their behavior and they're not out there having as much contact, so that means there's less opportunities for transmission to occur."

"Those three things coming together is what's going to drive the epidemic curve down," Aragón said.

The California Department of Public Health this week released updated guidance recommending that those with a confirmed or suspected monkeypox case should isolate at home until either infection has been ruled out or their lesions are fully healed, a fresh layer of skin has formed and they've been free of other symptoms for at least 48 hours.

Residents can resume limited, lower-risk activities if they've been free of fever, respiratory symptoms or new lesions for at least 48 hours and any lesions that can't be covered — like those on the face — are fully healed. In that instance, residents would need to bandage or cover any unhealed lesions, wear a well-fitting mask when around others; and avoid crowded settings, sharing towels or personal objects, and direct skin-to-skin contact.

People who have had monkeypox do not need the vaccine because they are immune, according to the county Department of Public Health. People who got the first dose of vaccine and were later infected generally don't need the second dose; however, a second dose may be suggested by a healthcare provider.

County officials have begun to make vaccinations available to high-risk people in the county jail system and among homeless people.

Officials have long said the risk of monkeypox exposure is primarily through intimate skin-to-skin contact, and transmission of the virus has not been seen in this outbreak through surfaces at gyms or other public surfaces.

However, in 2018, there was a single documented case of monkeypox transmission in Britain in which a healthcare assistant was infected with monkeypox after changing "presumably contaminated bedding" without wearing a face mask or respirator. The worker had contact with the sheets during a time at which the patient had skin lesions but hadn't yet been diagnosed with monkeypox and placed under isolation, according to medical journals.

Davis suggested that workers who are cleaning surfaces in settings that are touched frequently, such as gym equipment, or laundering bedding, towels and uniforms, take care to implement reasonable general-prevention practices that also protect against COVID-19 and other illnesses.

Workers should wear disposable gloves when cleaning, and workplaces should make handwashing facilities and hand sanitizer available for employees and customers, Davis said.

"We also encourage businesses where workers provide personal care services — such as massages or skin treatment — to consider posting signage asking customers or clients to delay services if they are experiencing symptoms, or if they have new or unexplained rashes, bumps, pustules, blisters or scabs that started as blisters," he said.

	<p>Also recommended is "that workers visually inspect the area of skin that will be touched. And, of course, workers should not under any circumstances touch a rash," Davis continued.</p> <p>Residents can request the monkeypox vaccine through their regular healthcare provider or sign up online with the county Department of Public Health to request a vaccination. They also can call the health agency at (833) 540-0473, seven days a week between 8 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Moscow car bomb kills Putin ally's daughter</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/21/daria-dugina-car-explosion-moscow-putin/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/21/daria-dugina-car-explosion-moscow-putin/</a>
GIST	<p>The daughter of Alexander Dugin, a far-right Russian nationalist who helped shape the ideas behind President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, was killed Saturday when the car she was driving exploded near Moscow, according to Russia's main investigative authority.</p> <p>Russia's Investigative Committee said it was looking into the incident and had opened a criminal murder case.</p> <p>A Toyota Land Cruiser "went off at full speed on a public highway" and caught fire, it said, after an "explosive device planted under the bottom of the car on the driver's side" blew up. The driver, identified by the committee as "journalist and political scientist Daria Dugina," died at the scene. It said early evidence pointed to "a murder for hire."</p> <p>Dugina, 29, was driving her father's car from a festival they both attended when the blast occurred, engulfing the car in flames, Dugin's friend Andrey Krasnov told the state-run media outlet Tass. Krasnov said he believed her father was the target of an attack, "or maybe the two of them."</p> <p>Dugin, a scathing critic of the United States, with close ties to the Kremlin, is sometimes referred to as "Putin's Rasputin" or "Putin's brain." Although he doesn't hold an official government position, and the extent of his direct relationship with Putin is not clear, Dugin has long called for the reabsorption of Ukraine into Russia — and experts say his language and expansionist views of Russia's place in the world have been echoed by the Kremlin and in recent speeches by Putin.</p> <p>His daughter has also spoken publicly in support of the war in Ukraine and Russian expansion. In March, she was <a href="#">sanctioned by the United States</a> as part of a list of Russian elites and Russian intelligence-directed disinformation outlets, alongside her father who has been designated for sanctions since 2015. She was also <a href="#">sanctioned by the United Kingdom</a> in July for her support of Russia's invasion.</p> <p>"The car caught fire immediately [following the explosion]. She lost control, because she was driving at speed, and flew to the opposite side of the road," Krasnov told the Russian state media outlet Tass, describing it as a "very grave event."</p> <p>Krasnov said Dugin, who left the festival in a different vehicle, returned to the scene after the explosion. Videos circulating on <a href="#">social media</a> appear to show a visibly distraught Dugin standing on a road strewn with debris, holding his head in his hands. The remains of a car were in flames on the roadside. The Washington Post was not immediately able to independently verify the videos.</p> <p>The blast occurred about 9 p.m. local time near the village of Bolshie Vyazyomy, southwest of Moscow, the committee said. Investigators were dispatched to the scene and seized evidence, including dash cam footage, while an explosives expert examined the burnt car in a specialized parking lot, the committee said Sunday.</p> <p>The incident appeared poised to create a new flashpoint.</p>

Denis Pushilin, a prominent separatist leader and key figure in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, immediately blamed Ukraine for Dugina's death, without providing any evidence.

Ukrainian officials denied any involvement in the blast and suggested it could be the result of an internal dispute within Russia. "As far as yesterday's [death of Daria Dugina] goes, I emphasize that we certainly had nothing to do with it," Mykhailo Podolyak, adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, said Sunday on Ukrainian television.

"We don't even comment on this, because it is not an interesting topic for the Ukrainian special services," Andrii Yusov, spokesperson for Ukraine's chief directorate of military intelligence, told The Washington Post Sunday. Yusov added that Dugina was not someone Ukrainian military intelligence "would make any official statements" about.

Still, Yusov noted that "I can say that the process of internal destruction of the 'Russky Mir,' or 'the Russian world,' has begun" and predicted that "the Russian world will eat and devour itself from the inside."

Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for Russia's Foreign Ministry, said Sunday that if Ukraine were found to have been involved in Dugina's death, "we should talk about the policy of state terrorism implemented by the Kyiv regime." She said Pushilin's allegations "must be verified by the competent authorities."

The U.K. Treasury Department described Dugina in its sanctions list as a "frequent and high-profile contributor of disinformation in relation to Ukraine and the Russian invasion of Ukraine on various online platforms."

The U.S. Treasury Department, upon sanctioning Dugina, said she was the chief editor of a disinformation website called United World International, which had suggested that Ukraine would "perish" if it was admitted to NATO. The website was developed by a Russian political influence operation called "[Project Lakhta](#)," which Treasury officials say has used fictitious online personas to interfere in U.S. elections since at least 2014.

According to Treasury officials, Dugina's father was first designated in 2015 for "being responsible for or complicit in actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, stability, or sovereignty or territorial integrity of Ukraine."

Dugin was a leader of the Eurasian Youth Union, which actively recruited individuals with military and combat experience to fight on behalf of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, a separatist enclave in eastern Ukraine that has played a central role in Putin's justification for war.

In an interview with a Russian YouTuber in [March](#), Dugina said that Ukrainian identity is mostly localized in western Ukraine, and that eastern Ukraine — including the Donbas region — was likely to accept a "Eurasian Empire" on the basis of religious faith and nationality.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Haitians feel abandoned year after quake</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/21/haiti-august-2021-earthquake-recovery/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/21/haiti-august-2021-earthquake-recovery/</a>
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Guismet Dorvilier spent six years building a house for his family in Corail, a remote community on the coast of Haiti's southwestern peninsula. Then, last August, a powerful earthquake struck, grinding its hard concrete walls — his "life's work" — into rubble.</p> <p>Now, one year later, Dorvilier, a public school director, is still living with eight family members under a plastic sheet. His closest neighbors are, too. His school — one of seven in Corail that was pulverized by the quake — has not been rebuilt, and the new school year is just weeks away.</p> <p>"The state has abandoned us," Dorvilier said.</p>

His strife is emblematic of the morass across much of Haiti's southwest one year after the 7.2-magnitude quake hit on Aug. 14, killing more than 2,200 people, injuring 12,000 and flattening tens of thousands of homes and buildings in an area that was still reeling from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

Residents have been frustrated by a recovery and rebuilding effort that has advanced at a glacial pace, stymied by spiraling gang violence in the capital, political instability, a global economic slowdown, donor fatigue and the emergence of other crises around the world to command more attention — and dollars.

After the quake, the United Nations appealed for \$187 million. Donors contributed \$77 million — less than half.

“In meetings, NGOs say that there are too many problems in the world right now, like the war in Europe and the coronavirus,” said Silvera Guillaume, a civil protection official stationed in Les Cayes, a coastal city that was hit hard by the temblor. “And that's why there are fewer investments in the south.”

The result is that Haitians feel forgotten, forced to adopt measures meant to be temporary but that they fear could be permanent. Thousands of displaced families are living in encampments or under tarps. Roads are inaccessible. Battered buildings, including schools and hospitals, await repair or demolition.

Sandra Lamarque, the Haiti operations coordinator for Doctors Without Borders, said access to health care in the southwest was already limited before the quake, and there hasn't been a sustainable reconstruction effort for facilities that were damaged or destroyed. She visited Les Cayes in June.

“Nothing has changed a year later, or very little has changed,” she said.

Of the 1,250 schools that were damaged or destroyed, 38 have been rebuilt. Teachers have tried giving lessons under trees or flimsy tents that provide little, if any, protection from the rain. That has left more than 250,000 children without “adequate” access to education, according to UNICEF.

In Corail, Dorvilier said, a man offered his house as a temporary school. But in April, he kicked the 290 students and their teachers out. The house had sustained damage during the quake, and he wanted to begin repairing it.

“Our only hope to reopen this year is an NGO that promised to rebuild a better provisional school,” Dorvilier said. “The parents of our students cannot contribute. ... They cannot buy books for their children, and a lot come to school without shoes.”

Last year's earthquake was stronger than the temblor that killed more than 220,000 here in 2010, but it caused less damage because its epicenter was farther from Port-au-Prince, the densely populated capital. Still, it struck many remote and hard-to-access towns and the Caribbean nation's breadbasket.

The response has been complicated by soaring hunger, endemic poverty, intermittent fuel shortages, rising gang violence and political instability that worsened with the still-unsolved assassination in July 2021 of President Jovenel Moïse.

One year later, on almost every indicator, the trends are heading in the wrong direction.

Inflation has skyrocketed to 26 percent. The number of people facing acute food insecurity has grown. Those affected by the quake were already among Haiti's most food-insecure.

Violent gangs have tightened their grip over swaths of Port-au-Prince and the main artery to the south, terrorizing Haitians of all stations with rampant kidnapping. A truce, brokered in the immediate aftermath of the quake to allow aid to pass, has long since expired.

That has left aid groups few options but to fly or travel by boat to reach quake-shattered areas. The gangs also control some ports; private contractors who transport fuel, medicines or other materials to the south have jacked up their prices to compensate for the safety risks.

“It’s a headache to work in such a situation,” said Bruno Maes, UNICEF’s Haiti director. “We have to admit this.”

Haiti’s interim government, led by Prime Minister Ariel Henry has pledged to crack down on the gang violence, but there has been no change. The Haitian justice system’s investigation into Moïse’s assassination, meanwhile, has effectively ground to a halt.

“It’s not as if during the response, you have these problems and you’ve seen them improve over the last year,” said Cara Buck, the Haiti director for Mercy Corps. “Not only have they not improved — they’re worsening.”

The effects of the security crisis in Port-au-Prince have had ripple effects in the quake-affected region.

In Corail, 32 farmers attempted to travel by boat to Port-au-Prince last month to sell fish and crops, but when their boat reached the coastal commune of Léogâne, it was taken over by armed bandits who tied the passengers up with rope, seized their merchandise and took the boat’s two motors, leaving the boat drifting in the water.

“These people are constantly asking me for help because they lost their equipment during the earthquake,” said Alex Maxcia, the principal mayor of Corail. “The insecurity is getting out of control, and now it’s even more difficult for them to sell their hard work in the context of rising inflation.”

Many here were keen to avoid the mistakes of the response to the 2010 earthquake. International agencies set aside more than \$13 billion to respond to the disaster, but much of it was mismanaged and aid groups faced heavy criticism for failing to coordinate with local officials and to let them lead the response.

More than a decade later, some analysts say, the ghosts of 2010 might have made potential donors reluctant.

“After the [2021] earthquake, we didn’t have — like in 2010 — a huge amount of resources arriving in Haiti,” said Christian Cricboom, Haiti director for the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “This is also because of the question of how the funds were used in 2010 and the fatigue of the donors regarding Haiti.”

That’s created a cruel irony.

“The situation in Haiti is deteriorating,” Cricboom said. “The needs are increasing but not necessarily the contributions.”

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HEADLINE	08/21 Ukraine warns possible Russia escalation
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-zelensky-warns-of-russian-escalation-after-putin-allys-daughter-is-killed-11661075038?mod=hp_lead_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-zelensky-warns-of-russian-escalation-after-putin-allys-daughter-is-killed-11661075038?mod=hp_lead_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>POKROVSK, Ukraine—Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned of a possible escalation by Russia ahead of Ukraine’s Independence Day as Moscow opened an investigation into a car explosion that killed the daughter of an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>“We should be conscious of the fact that this week Russia may try to do something particularly nasty,” the Ukrainian leader said in his daily video address late on Saturday. “But Russia has done the same constantly each week throughout the past six months.”</p>



Mr. Zelensky didn't give details in his speech as to what he believed Moscow was planning, but tensions have been rising amid [suspected Ukrainian attacks](#) on military infrastructure on the Russian-controlled Crimean Peninsula and on Russian territory close to the border with Ukraine.

Officials in Kyiv have warned that Russia could stage renewed attacks to coincide with Independence Day on Wednesday, a major national holiday that will be taking place for the first time since Russia's full-scale invasion began in February. Any large gathering creates a possible target, meaning the military parades of the past are out of the question, and no official celebrations are expected during this year's anniversary.

In the northeastern Kharkiv region, part of which remains under Russian occupation, governor Oleh Synehubov announced a series of restrictions on movement this week including a 36-hour curfew beginning on the eve of Independence Day on Tuesday until early morning on Thursday.

"Please treat such steps with understanding and prepare to stay at home or in bomb shelters—this is our security," he wrote on the Telegram social-media platform. "We won't give the enemy the chance for any provocations. On the day of our independence we will be particularly alert."

As the war nears the six-month mark, Russia is increasingly feeling the fallout. Strikes on key military facilities in Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014, [have brought the war close to home](#) for many Russian citizens. They have also forced Russian-installed officials in Crimea to increase security, potentially drawing some forces away from the front lines in Ukraine.

While Ukraine hasn't officially taken responsibility for the attacks, Ukrainian officials have privately confirmed Kyiv was behind the incidents. Footage posted to social media overnight into Sunday showed what appeared to be Russian air defenses firing from the peninsula, accompanied by comments from locals expressing surprise at the spectacle.

On Saturday evening, a car carrying the daughter of prominent Russian far-right ideologue Aleksandr Dugin was blown up outside Moscow. Daria Dugina was killed on the spot, and footage posted to social media later showed Mr. Dugin at the scene, holding his head in his hands as he stood amid what appeared to be debris from the explosion.

Mr. Dugin had for years called on Russia to expand its territory and re-establish its empire by seizing Ukraine. In 2014, as Russian-backed separatists were capturing government buildings in eastern Ukraine and Moscow fomented an armed conflict there, Mr. Dugin called for full-scale war against Russia's neighbor. His daughter had been a key supporter of Eurasianism, Mr. Dugin's unique brand of Russian nationalism. Mr. Dugin had met with French politician Marine Le Pen and other far-right leaders in Europe.

Russia's Investigative Committee said it had launched a probe into the incident, which it described as a preplanned ordered hit in which the Toyota Land Cruiser driven by Ms. Dugina exploded at around 9 p.m. local time as the likely result of a bomb placed inside. No one has claimed responsibility.

In the aftermath of the explosion, supporters of Mr. Dugin including Tsargrad, the TV channel on which he frequently appeared as a guest, called for retribution against Ukraine. "Decision-making centers!" wrote Margarita Simonyan, the editor of Russian state TV channel RT, in a Telegram post apparently referencing Mr. Putin's earlier warnings that Moscow would strike key government buildings in Kyiv and elsewhere if the war escalates.

Kyiv has denied responsibility. "Ukraine has no connection to yesterday's explosion because we are not a criminal state like Russia," Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Mr. Zelensky, said in a TV interview.

Maria Zakharova, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, said that if the attack was organized by Ukraine then Kyiv should be accused of state terrorism.

In another sign of the conflict possibly spilling over into the region, Albania, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, said Sunday it was investigating the circumstances surrounding the arrest of two Russian nationals and a Ukrainian who were trying to enter a military weapons factory in central Albania.

Two Albanian soldiers were injured at the Gramsh plant Saturday when one of the Russians aimed what the Albanian Defense Ministry said was a chemical spray at their faces after trying to take photographs at the facility.

The Russian, 24 years old, was taken into police custody, while the two other suspects, 33 and 25, were detained outside the perimeter of the factory, the defense ministry said.

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama said all three are suspected of espionage, and antiterrorism police have joined the investigation along with Albanian intelligence agencies. The two injured Albanian guards are no longer in danger, the defense ministry said.

While Albania, which joined NATO in 2009, is a popular summer destination for Russian and Ukrainian tourists, the Gramsh plant is more than 40 miles from the nearest beaches where most visitors gather. Three weeks ago an explosion hit an ammunition depot in Bulgaria owned by an arms dealer who Bulgarian authorities say is a middleman for exports of munitions to Ukraine. The arrests in Albania could feed into an emerging debate in Europe about a possible ban on issuing tourist visas to Russian citizens.

The incidents come as Russia continues to stall in its military campaign to seize swaths of Ukraine's east, with no significant territory gained since it captured the cities of Lysychansk and Severodonetsk more than six weeks ago. A Russian offensive to take the city of Bakhmut grinds on as Ukraine focuses some of its resources on preparations for a counteroffensive to liberate territory taken by Russia in the south, laying the groundwork with continued strikes on ammunition depots that are severing Russian supply lines.

"Let's already today contemplate, see, and assess what road we have traveled," Mr. Zelensky said in his video address. "How much we managed to achieve in this fight, to tear from the grasp of the Russian army, which for decades was thought to be unbeatable."

Meanwhile, Russia has continued rocket strikes on major Ukrainian cities including Mykolaiv and Odessa in the south, where a deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations to resume the export of grain from Black Sea ports is being carefully monitored by the Ukrainian military amid constant threats of Russian attack.

Officials in Odessa said that its air defenses had intercepted two Russian Kalibr missiles fired from Russian ships on the Black Sea early on Sunday, with three other missiles hitting an agricultural enterprise near the city and damaging grain silos there. Russia didn't immediately comment on the allegations.

In Ukraine's south, a Russian-held area that includes the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has seen fierce fighting as Ukrainian troops located across the Dnipro River from the plant target Russian positions and Moscow pushes to shore up its defenses. Both sides have accused each other of endangering the plant and risking a nuclear incident.

Mr. Zelensky has said representatives of the U.N. and the International Atomic Energy Agency were ironing out the details of a mission that "could help restore safety" to the plant.

Russia has denied targeting the plant, where it is keeping an estimated 500 troops as part of a garrison holding the occupied Ukrainian city of Enerhodar. It has accused Ukraine of deliberately shelling the plant from Nikopol, across the river. The Kremlin has warned of similarly catastrophic consequences if fighting there continues, and the international community has urged Russia to return the plant to Ukrainian control.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-south-korea-revive-live-military-drills-after-four-year-hiatus-11661074202?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-south-korea-revive-live-military-drills-after-four-year-hiatus-11661074202?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL—For the first time in four years, the U.S. and South Korea will revive their live-action military drills, sharpening their preparedness as the North Korean nuclear threat worsens and China steps up its presence around Taiwan.</p> <p>The 11-day joint drills, which start Monday in South Korea, are expected to feature once again jet fighters soaring in the skies, tanks rumbling down roads and thousands of soldiers simulating a conflict with the Kim Jong Un regime.</p> <p>The annual summertime training, known as Ulchi Freedom Shield, had been largely reduced to computer simulations since 2018. At the time, President Donald Trump, fresh off his first meeting with Mr. Kim in Singapore, ordered the training to be scaled down, criticizing it as costly and provocative. South Korea's then-leader, who favored engagement with Pyongyang, didn't oppose the move.</p> <p>The U.S. and South Korea have in recent years said readiness levels could be maintained despite the reduced exercises. Retired South Korean military officials have said preparedness has suffered, adding that the digital training doesn't replicate the shoulder-to-shoulder action required should war erupt.</p> <p>Some active-duty soldiers have even expressed concern about the lack of field drills, said Cho Dong-youn, a former South Korean army major and a military-studies professor at Seo Kyeong University in Seoul. "The outdoor exercises are essential in building cooperation between the U.S. and South Korean forces and practicing crisis management," Ms. Cho said.</p> <p>While a return to the large-scale exercises indicates that the U.S. and South Korea are normalizing the alliance, the move will likely only encourage North Korea's current move toward nuclear modernization, said Van Jackson, a former Obama administration Pentagon official now at New Zealand's Victoria University of Wellington. For the governments in Beijing and Pyongyang, the military exercises will justify their defiance of Washington and its allies, he added.</p> <p>"They will nudge China and North Korea closer together," said Mr. Jackson, referring to the large-scale exercises.</p> <p>The political and security picture has changed in northeastern Asia since the U.S.-South Korean drills were toned down in 2018. President Biden has made strengthening alliances a priority, while South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, backs a toughened posture with the Kim regime. The two leaders, in a meeting in Seoul, agreed to expand the field exercises and boost deterrence if necessary.</p> <p>North Korea has restarted testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles and appears to be preparing for its first nuclear test since 2017. Russia has invaded Ukraine, while tensions between the U.S. and China have risen after a visit by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan.</p> <p>The return to military training by the U.S. and its allies extends beyond joint drills in South Korea. The U.S., South Korea and Japan recently concluded missile-tracking and defense exercises in the waters off Hawaii, the first such combined training since 2017.</p> <p>China has expressed concern over U.S. expansion of military exercises with its allies, saying it could raise tensions with North Korea. China is likely most concerned about the U.S.'s surveillance operations conducted during the joint exercises, which can gather intelligence on North Korea's and China's military facilities with surveillance aircraft involved in the drills, according to security experts.</p> <p>Starting on Monday, South Korea and the U.S. will conduct 11 joint field exercises including drills designed to simulate repelling a North Korean attack and exercises simulating joint attacks and removal of weapons of mass destruction, according to South Korea's Defense Ministry.</p>

U.S. Forces Korea, which oversees roughly 28,500 American personnel stationed in South Korea, declined to comment on the drills.

While the U.S. and South Korea argue that the exercises are defensive in nature, the drills have long irritated North Korea, which considers them a rehearsal for an invasion.

In a speech last month, Mr. Kim referred to the military exercises as he accused the U.S. and South Korea of engaging in “dangerous, illegal, hostile acts.” He threatened to annihilate South Korea’s military and said the country’s nuclear missiles are ready for a conflict with the U.S.

Mr. Kim’s sister, who serves as the regime’s mouthpiece, accused South Korea in a statement published Friday by Pyongyang’s state media of conducting war exercises. In the short term, North Korea will likely use the joint exercises for propaganda purposes to justify future provocations and its seventh nuclear test, according to security experts. The Kim regime has conducted a record number of weapons tests this year, including the test-firing Wednesday of two cruise missiles.

“The joint drills will trigger an angrier response, especially as North Korea has rejected Washington and Seoul’s calls for talks,” said Park Won-gon, a professor of North Korean studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

Earlier this month South Korea’s defense minister said North Korea might conduct “strategic and tactical provocations” in response to the joint exercises.

The U.S. and South Korea would respond sternly if North Korea conducted a nuclear test by deploying strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula, according to South Korea’s Defense Ministry. Strategic assets refer to weapons such as bombers, aircraft carriers, stealth jet fighters and nuclear submarines.

Pentagon officials have said the joint drills are a “principal method of ensuring the combined alliance’s readiness.” Before the large-scale exercises were restored, Gen. Paul J. LaCamera, commander of U.S. Forces Korea, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in March that he backed such a return.

“My preference is to do as much training as possible at all echelons,” Gen. LaCamera said.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Putin war reaches deadlock after 6mo.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/six-months-of-hell-in-ukraine-how-putins-crazy-war-reached-deadlock">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/six-months-of-hell-in-ukraine-how-putins-crazy-war-reached-deadlock</a>
GIST	<p>It was early in the evening of 21 February that it became impossible to ignore that Vladimir Putin was planning something truly terrible for Ukraine.</p> <p>Up to that moment, exactly six months ago, many voices were urging calm in the face of increasingly insistent American and British warnings of a full-scale invasion. The French and German governments, Russian officials and even Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy suggested Putin’s troop buildup was a bluff, and the warnings from Washington were over-egged.</p> <p>Then Putin appeared on television, chairing a meeting of his security council in the Kremlin. Ordering his courtiers, one by one, to the microphone, Putin played at seeking their counsel, humiliating the few who hesitated to give the answers he wanted.</p> <p>Ostensibly, the issue under discussion was whether Russia should recognise the “independence” of the so called Donetsk and Luhansk “people’s republics”.</p> <p>But that was just a pretext. Afterwards, Russian television cut to <a href="#">a long and rambling address by Putin</a> in which he belittled Ukrainian history and statehood.</p>

Three days later, in the early hours of the morning, the Russian assault began, with missiles raining down on targets across Ukraine and ground troops pouring into the country from three directions.

That fateful decision has changed Ukraine, Russia and the world irrevocably over the intervening six months. Thousands of Ukrainians are dead and [millions displaced](#), each case a tragedy for which the country's impressive wartime spirit and unity are scant compensation.

Russia has also changed, with the regime dropping the last vestiges of democracy and embracing full-fledged militarism, while the west has recalibrated its relations with Russia and Russian money, and many countries have begun an unprecedented military aid programme to Ukraine.

The shock of those first hours of the war, when the unthinkable became reality, is a moment that is likely to stay with every Ukrainian for the rest of their lives.

In the chaotic first days, events moved incredibly fast. By the end of the first week, the country had already settled into a new reality in which roads were dotted with checkpoints run by locals carrying whatever arms they could get their hands on, mayors strutted around their towns in body armour organising the defence, and families endured separation from their loved ones, as millions of women and children rushed to safety abroad.

Split-second decisions could mean life or death. People whose friends had mocked them in previous weeks for hoarding food or making escape plans were now hailed as prophets. Countless families decided to leave Kyiv for the peaceful commuter towns to its west, hoping to sit out the expected attack on the city there, only to find themselves subjected to a month of terror from occupying forces, while the centre of the capital remained relatively unscathed.

In the southern city of Mariupol, those who decided to leave in the first days, when it was still possible, were able to find safety in other parts of Ukraine or abroad. Those who decided to wait and see ended up stuck, forced to endure weeks of bombardment during the long and violent Russian operation to take control of the city.

Their stories, of burying bodies in shallow courtyard graves, of sheltering in damp, freezing basements, of illness, miscarriages, starvation and deprivation, were reminiscent of the second world war.

Amid all the horror and trauma, an uplifting story emerged of a newly united country where previous divisions evaporated in the face of the existential threat from the east. The resistance began with Zelenskiy and his team, who stayed in Kyiv instead of fleeing, and was replicated at many levels of society.

"The Kremlin really hoped that we would be disoriented and would run away," said deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk, who had been called several days before the invasion by the British ambassador [and advised to flee](#) the capital. Instead, she stayed, and worked inside Zelenskiy's fortified compound in the centre of Kyiv, sleeping on a camp bed.

"Can you imagine if people found out that the president and his team, and the government, had run away? Of course, it would have demoralised everyone," she said.

In most towns and cities, [the local mayors also remained in place](#) and helped organise the resistance.

"They didn't expect this," said Gennadiy Trukhanov, the mayor of Odesa, in an interview during the first weeks of the war. Trukhanov was indicative of a change among many Ukrainian officials in the south and east of the country, who had previously been perceived as pro-Russian, but now came down firmly on the side of Kyiv.

"They didn't expect that there would be barricades in Odesa, and that people wouldn't welcome them with bread and salt, that Kharkiv would fight, that Chernihiv would fight," he said.

In the nearby Kherson region, where the Russian army was able to roll in without much military resistance during the first few days of the war, it is clear that some security officials collaborated with the Russians, and a number of politicians have agreed to work for Kremlin-run administrations.

But locals report that the Russians are now struggling to fill mid-level positions, and face a strong underground opposition from among the majority of locals who remain loyal to Ukraine.

Back in February, the stated goal of the “special military operation”, as the Kremlin calls it, was that it was all about protecting the Russian-speaking populations of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the meaningless goal of “denazification” of the country.

“They said they are going to free us from Nazis, I said very good, but during 33 years of living in Melitopol I never met one,” said Ivan Fedorov, the mayor of Melitopol, who was kidnapped and interrogated for several days before being released in a prisoner swap and sent to Kyiv-controlled territory.

At other times, Kremlin talking heads have said the conflict is about Nato, and the encroachment of the military alliance on Russia’s borders.

As the Russian advance on Kyiv stalled, Putin’s hopes of a swift operation that would install a new pro-Russian government in Kyiv, and keep Ukraine as a nominally independent state but inside Moscow’s orbit, were exposed as being based on a total misunderstanding of how Ukraine has changed in recent years.

That led to a change in rhetoric. Now, Russian politicians talk in the language of a naked land grab, of creating a “buffer” in Ukraine between Moscow and the west. The disdain for Ukrainian people, language and culture, always lurking in the background, has come more to the fore.

This mixed messaging could be seen in the school building in Novyi Bykiv, east of Kyiv, where a Russian Buk missile battalion was based for a month at the beginning of the war. After the withdrawal, the soldiers’ scrawled chalk messages on the blackboards showed the muddle of sentiments the Russians had experienced: some were apologetic, others abusive. In the classrooms, they had painted over the faces of Ukrainian historical and literary figures, a literal manifestation of the desire to erase Ukrainian culture.

Some of the troops appeared confused and tormented by their role as occupiers. “Listen, I’m sorry. We didn’t know it would be like this,” one tearful soldier told a woman whose beauty salon he was using as a base, during the occupation of the town of Trostianets.

But this confusion quickly turned to anger and hatred when the Russians were faced with a surprisingly fierce Ukrainian counter-attack and felt the anger of the local populations, instead of the gratitude they had been told to expect.

Throughout the occupied areas around Kyiv, Russian soldiers committed murder and other war crimes. There was widespread looting. When news of the horrors in Bucha and elsewhere began to seep out at the end of March, it only hardened Ukrainian resolve, and has left psychological wounds that are likely to fester for generations.

In Russia, initial horror at the invasion among political and business elites was followed by a recognition that it had fundamentally changed the dynamic between Russia and the west. Faced with a stark choice, most have chosen to stay quiet or to rebrand themselves as patriots.

“With the sanctions, people realise they have no chance of a life in the west any more, so they’re all rallying around the flag,” said one Kremlin-connected source.

Lower down the chain, many Russians have left the country, either for political reasons or because sanctions made their businesses impossible. Just as in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution a century earlier, cities close to Russia’s borders have filled up with tens of thousands of Russian exiles.



Riga, the capital of Latvia, has become the hub for independent journalists who have been criminalised and banned from working in Russia; Yerevan in Armenia is where thousands of tech professionals have travelled and now call home. Tbilisi in Georgia, the Turkish city of Istanbul, the Serbian capital Belgrade and Berlin all have new Russian exile communities.

On occasion, the insistence by Russian exiles that they, too, are victims has caused friction with the larger communities of Ukrainian refugees forced to flee the invasion.

Six months in, how it all ends is a question that is harder than ever to answer. In the early weeks of the war, the Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich travelled to Kyiv on a Kremlin-sanctioned mission to broker peace talks between Zelenskiy and Putin.

In March, Abramovich felt he might be close to achieving something that could serve as a workable template for talks between the two leaders, according to those briefed on the discussions, but nothing came of it. Since the world found out about the crimes in Bucha and elsewhere, there has been little by way of substantive discussion.

Moscow is continuing its slow-moving offensive in the Donbas, but any plans to regroup and launch a new assault on Kyiv look unrealistic in the medium term. Even the referendums Moscow plans in occupied territories, to provide the thinnest of cover for annexation, look uncertain to take place as the situation on the ground remains too unstable. Ukraine has repeatedly promised a counterattack, though that is also fraught with difficulties.

“At this stage, I’m not sure if anyone knows what the endgame is,” said the Kremlin-connected source.

On 24 August, half a year since the start of the invasion, Ukraine will celebrate its independence day. In a twist on the traditional military parade, dozens of pieces of gnarled and twisted Russian military hardware have been brought to Kyiv’s central Khreshchatyk street.

It is both a recognition of the fact that Ukraine’s military is needed at the front, and a darkly humorous nod to the reports that Putin hoped to hold a victory parade on the avenue after swiftly conquering Kyiv; there were reports that some of his soldiers had even packed parade uniforms.

“Six months into the large-scale war the shameful display of rusty Russian metal is a reminder to all dictators how their plans may be ruined by a free and courageous nation,” said the country’s defence ministry.

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HEADLINE	08/21 Day 179 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/21/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-179-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/21/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-179-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy has warned Ukrainians to be vigilant</b> in the coming week as they prepare to celebrate their independence day on Wednesday. In his nightly video address on Saturday, Zelenskiy said Ukrainians must not allow Moscow to “spread despondency and fear” as they mark the 31st anniversary of independence from Soviet rule. “We must all be aware that this week Russia could try to do something particularly ugly, something particularly vicious,” Zelenskiy said.</li><li>• <b>The curfew in Ukraine’s second largest city, Kharkiv, will be extended for the entire day on Wednesday</b>, regional governor Oleh Synhub said on Saturday. The north-eastern city is regularly hit by Russian shelling and normally has a curfew from 10pm to 6am but extra precautions were required on independence day.</li><li>• <b>Ukraine launched a fresh strike on Russia’s Black Sea fleet headquarters at Sevastopol earlier on Saturday.</b> Officials in the annexed <a href="#">Crimean peninsula said that at least one drone had</a></li></ul>

	<p><a href="#">been shot down</a> and that the city's air defence system had been called into action again on Saturday night.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video <a href="#">shared on Twitter</a></b> appeared to show Russian air defences attempting to destroy the UAV and dark plumes of smoke rising from the city.</li> <li>• <b>Three people with Russian and Ukrainian passports have been arrested for suspected spying</b> after trying to break into a military base and arms factory in central Albania, the Albanian defense ministry said on Saturday. Two Albanian soldiers were injured in the incident at the Gramsh base, the ministry said, adding the conditions of the soldiers was stable. Albania's prime minister Edi Rama said the three individuals are "suspected of espionage".</li> <li>• <b>The US is planning to buy about 150,000 metric tonnes of grain from Ukraine</b> in the next few weeks for an upcoming shipment of food aid from ports no longer blockaded by war, the World Food Programme chief has said. The planned shipment, one of several the U.N. agency that fights hunger is pursuing, is more than six times the amount of grain that the first WFP-arranged ship from Ukraine is now carrying toward people in the Horn of Africa at risk of starvation.</li> <li>• <b>António Guterres, the UN secretary general, said he was moved by the sight of Ukrainian wheat being shipped from Turkey.</b> Russian fertilisers and agricultural products must be able to reach world markets "unimpeded" or a global food crisis could strike as early as next year, he said.</li> <li>• <b>Four children have reportedly been injured</b> following a Russian strike on a residential building in the Mykolaiv region of <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Three people with Russian and Ukrainian passports have been arrested for suspected spying</b> after trying to break into a military base and arms factory in central Albania, the Albanian defense ministry said on Saturday. Two Albanian soldiers were injured in the incident at the Gramsh base, the ministry said, adding the conditions of the soldiers was stable. Albania's prime minister Edi Rama said the three individuals are "suspected of espionage".</li> <li>• <b>Russian entities and individuals were attempting to use Turkey to bypass western sanctions</b> imposed over Moscow's war in <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, the US deputy treasury secretary, Wally Adeyemo, told Turkey's deputy finance minister, Yunus Elitas, that the US treasury department said. In a phone call, the department said, the two also discussed efforts to implement and enforce sanctions against <a href="#">Russia</a>, Reuters reports.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine's defence ministry on Saturday said its forces had killed a total of 44,900 Russian personnel</b> – a rise of 200 on the day before.</li> <li>• <b>Olaf Scholz has praised Alexei Navalny</b> on the second anniversary of the jailed <a href="#">Russian opposition politician's attempted poisoning</a>.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Relentless China diplomat admonishes US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/21/world/asia/china-wang-yi-diplomacy.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/21/world/asia/china-wang-yi-diplomacy.html</a>
GIST	<p>China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, a dapper man in well-pressed suits, keeps up a relentless travel schedule, more than 30 countries so far this year, to places big and small: island nations in the Pacific, Central Asia on China's western periphery and, often, Africa.</p> <p>He is the campaigner for the global ambitions of his boss, China's leader, Xi Jinping, carrying the message that Beijing will not be pushed around, least of all by the United States.</p> <p>During a meeting last month with Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in Indonesia, Mr. Wang arrived with a list of four "wrongdoings to be corrected," including that the United States must rectify its "serious Sinophobia." Relations would be at a "dead end" if the demands were ignored, Global Times, a nationalist Communist Party newspaper, warned later.</p> <p>As China carves out its place in a changing world order, Mr. Wang has been its public face, particularly because Mr. Xi hasn't visited a foreign country since the start of the pandemic. Mr. Wang has been extolling Mr. Xi's vision for China as a global leader that embraces the developing world and that leads an authoritarian axis against the United States and its allies.</p>

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Mr. Wang has largely avoided Europe, where Beijing is seen as friendly to Moscow and China's approval ratings have plummeted. He has been the standard-bearer for a hardened stance against Taiwan. And he has worked to align Muslim countries with Beijing, in part to ensure a bulwark against Western criticisms of its mass detention of Uyghurs, a Muslim minority.

He has visited the United States just once during the Biden presidency: a bitter meeting in Anchorage with Mr. Biden's two senior diplomats early last year.

Mr. Wang rebuked Mr. Blinken and the president's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, then for imposing sanctions on Chinese officials 24 hours before the meeting. "This is not supposed to be the way one should welcome his guests," Mr. Wang said at the outset of the talks.

In a not-so-subtle way, Mr. Wang is setting up a fight for Asia, with China in one corner and the United States in the other.

"China's argument is that Asian problems should be solved by Asians," said Bilahari Kausikan, former foreign secretary of Singapore, who has been with Mr. Wang in closed-door diplomatic meetings. "The argument also says that the U.S. is an unreliable troublemaker."

It comes directly from Mr. Xi. "It is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia," Mr. Xi said in 2014 in the early years of his presidency. In this doctrine, the United States is a decades-long interloper in the region and a fading power.

The premise doesn't always sit well, Mr. Kausikan said. It can be interpreted by Asian diplomats as Mr. Wang's positioning China, the region's biggest economy, as a rich bully, calling the shots in a region with other powerhouses, like Japan and South Korea, both American allies.

In some Asian countries, the approach works, especially when accompanied by flattering phone calls from Mr. Xi, or even an audience with him. Last month, President Joko Widodo of Indonesia was invited to Beijing to meet with Mr. Xi, a trip the Indonesian leader considered an honor. Mr. Joko announced in a recent interview with Bloomberg News that Mr. Xi and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia will attend the annual summit of the Group of 20 leaders in Bali in November.

Appointed in 2013, Mr. Wang, 68, is one of China's longest serving foreign ministers in recent memory.

Mr. Wang was China's ambassador to Japan in the mid-aughts when Beijing was interested in improving relations with its former enemy. He speaks fluent Japanese and in Tokyo he played golf with Japanese businessmen.

He was a "gentleman, not a warrior" in Japan, said Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center, a Washington-based research group. "Then he became foreign minister, and he became entirely different."

A new acerbity surfaced when Mr. Xi warned Chinese diplomats that they needed a "new fighting spirit" during a period that coincided with mass protests in Hong Kong against the Communist Party's rule.

Word went out that the foreign ministry was too tame. Mr. Wang lit a fire. To rounds of applause, Mr. Wang repeated the mantra of a "fighting spirit" at a 70th anniversary party of the ministry in 2019.

His brusque demands on behalf of Mr. Xi have earned him a sobriquet among young Asian diplomats: Cao Cao, after a wily Chinese statesman of the second century, Mr. Kausikan said.

The hard-line approach has been fortified by Mr. Xi's friendship with Mr. Putin.

Mr. Wang was an early doubter of their alignment, according to two diplomats who spoke on the condition of anonymity given the political sensitivities. But he has since morphed into a firm supporter of a China-Russia axis.

At a recent conclave in Cambodia, Mr. Wang made a pointed expression of the new friendship. As the Japanese foreign minister prepared to address the crowd of assembled dignitaries, Mr. Wang conspicuously walked out with his Russian counterpart, Sergey V. Lavrov.

“Both Russia and China are creating a shared discourse that they will not be told what to do by liberal powers about their ‘core interests’ as they define them — Ukraine for Russia, Taiwan for China,” said Rana Mitter, a professor of Chinese history and politics at Oxford University. “Wang Yi would have had to have top-level authorization for such a gesture.”

Early in his rule, Mr. Xi launched an array of foreign gambits to develop geopolitical ties through investment, paying close attention to Africa. Following that example, Mr. Wang traditionally begins each year with visits to several African countries, where the foreign minister has a softer touch.

He showed up in Zambia, a country struggling with significant debt, in March. Two months later, Mr. Xi called the new leader there, Hakainde Hichilema. By July, China had made an unusual concession on its \$6 billion loan to Zambia, in openly agreeing to restructure the debt.

A top priority for Mr. Wang is to keep the United States off balance in the Asia-Pacific.

Recently, Mr. Wang put in a punishing 10 days flying around more than half a dozen small countries in a Boeing 737, staying at nice but less than palatial hotels.

He arrived in Fiji in late May, then flew to the Solomon Islands and other countries, expecting to get them to sign a “Common Development Vision.” In the Solomons, where Mr. Wang has had the most success, he signed a separate security deal that allows for China to build a port for commercial and possible military use.

But the countries Mr. Wang visited refused to sign the development document that would have given China the right to projects on cybersecurity and ocean mapping. Some of the countries cited concerns about aggravating the rivalry between the United States and China.

“They think they can walk in and everyone is going to bow down,” said Dorothy Wickham, founder and editor of the Melanesian News Network, who covered Mr. Wang’s visit. “They don’t understand that money is not everything.”

It’s an uncertainty that pervades China’s diplomatic strategy — and by extension Mr. Wang’s mission.

When the United States withdrew from Afghanistan a year ago, China seemed unsure whether it was an opportunity or a headache.

In March, Mr. Wang turned up in the Afghan capital seeking to build rapport with the Taliban. He met almost furtively with Siraj Haqqani, the interior minister. A photograph of Mr. Wang by an Afghan news agency shows him with his back to the camera and his hand stretched out toward Mr. Haqqani. The photo did not surface in the Chinese news.

Mostly, Beijing wants a stable Afghanistan and the return of several hundred Uyghurs, the Muslim minority that has faced mass detentions in China, said Sajjan M. Gohel, international security director of the Asia-Pacific Foundation, a research group.

The Taliban have offered little, least of all on the Uyghurs, Mr. Gohel said.

	“Wang Yi and Beijing may come to painfully realize that the Haqqanis operate to further their own strategic and ideological interests and not China’s,” he said.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Attacks directed at Seattle firefighters rise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/40-attacks-in-four-months-directed-at-seattle-firefighters">https://komonews.com/news/local/40-attacks-in-four-months-directed-at-seattle-firefighters</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Crews from the Seattle Fire Department are facing new dangers in recent months with many firefighters reporting being attacked while out responding to calls for help, according to letters recently submitted to the Seattle City Council.</p> <p>Kenny Stuart, president of Seattle Fire Fighters Union IAFF Local 27, has documented at least 40 assaults in just over four months.</p> <p>Many of the cases he referenced for city leaders involved responding to scenes at homeless camps.</p> <p>The department's firefighters want the city to take action to curb the violence, which they said only seems to be worsening.</p> <p>The concern is that firefighters will race out to provide medical care or knock down flames but too often they will become targets of the very people they are trying to help.</p> <p>“Who realized until we got the letter from the fire union that it was this dire for the last four months,” said Jim Fuda, who had a 33-year career with the King County Sheriff’s Office and now serves as executive director with Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound.</p> <p>Stuart laid out several recent attacks against his members, including.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On July 18, a firefighter was hit by a large rock while working to extinguish an encampment fire at 10th Avenue S. and Dearborn Street.</li> <li>• On June 3, firefighters on a medical call were chased around their rig when the patient tried to stab them.</li> </ul> <p>“They are being assaulted when they are going on service calls and that's something new,” Fuda said. “Whether it be mental illness or drugs, whatever the case might be.”</p> <p>Stuart’s letters make several references to attacks committed by people who live on the streets.</p> <p>In one instance, crews showed up to douse the flames at an encampment but instead were threatened by people wielding weapons, including a steel rebar club.</p> <p>Stuart wrote that a woman firefighter has been kicked in her genitalia and slapped in separate attacks by homeless people.</p> <p>“With this new threat that's coming up they're going to have to do something to better to protect themselves,” Fuda said.</p> <p>The union president is calling on city leaders to address this disturbing trend “before there is a tragedy,” he wrote.</p> <p>KOMO News requested interviews with the mayor, fire chief, interim police chief and a City Council member but received only written statements.</p> <p>Mayor Bruce Harrell's office said in a statement that he is "continuing to work with urgency and compassion to address the homelessness crisis and public safety issues related to encampments."</p>

	<p>City Councilwoman Lisa Herbold said: “I unequivocally condemn acts of violence and I support the safety of all in public service, especially first responders who put themselves in harm’s way.”</p> <p>However, it remains unclear what new measures are being pursued to address this dangerous trend.</p> <p>Since the uptick in assaults, the Seattle Fire Department has changed the way these reports are tracked, by launching a new form in April.</p> <p>Firefighters are encouraged to report any threatening incidents, even ones that don’t involve physical contact.</p> <p>The most recent report was filed Aug. 18 involving a patient in a medical call.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Military housing benefits lag as rents rise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/military-housing-benefits-lag-as-rents-rise-a4b8689ce497eac3fcc1d347ce7fcc23">https://apnews.com/article/military-housing-benefits-lag-as-rents-rise-a4b8689ce497eac3fcc1d347ce7fcc23</a>
GIST	<p>When Kristin Martin found out her husband was being transferred to Naval Base San Diego, securing housing for their family of five quickly took over her life.</p> <p>On-base housing wasn’t an option — the waitlist for a four-bedroom home in the neighborhoods they qualified for was 14 to 16 months.</p> <p>Neither were the military-only hotels near base where new arrivals can pay low rates as they get their bearings — those were full, too.</p> <p>So Martin cast a wide net across San Diego and started applying for rental homes, all sight unseen.</p> <p>“I was waking up and the first thing I was doing was looking at properties,” Martin said. “I was looking at it midday, before I went to bed. I had alerts set. It became a full-time job.”</p> <p>More than 30 rental applications later and hundreds of dollars in application fees down the drain, the Martins finally found a home.</p> <p>But there were caveats. They’d have to start paying rent a month before they actually moved. And, at \$4,200 per month, their rent was nearly \$700 more than the monthly basic allowance for housing, known as the BAH, that her husband, a lieutenant, receives.</p> <p>“We’ll probably be here two or three years, so that could be \$20,000 that we’re paying out of pocket above BAH just for rent,” Martin said after completing her family’s fourth move in 15 years last month.</p> <p>“It’s affecting us personally but then I think about how we were a junior enlisted family at one point. I cannot imagine the struggles (they) are going through.”</p> <p>Housing has long been a major benefit for service members, a subsidy to salaries that trail the private sector. But, amid record-breaking spikes in rent, the Department of Defense has neglected its commitment to help military families find affordable places to live, service members and housing activists say.</p> <p>That’s forced many to settle for substandard homes, deal with extremely long commutes or pay thousands out of pocket they hadn’t budgeted for.</p> <p>“We have families coming to us that are on exorbitantly lengthy waiting lists and sitting in homes that they can’t afford, like an Airbnb rental, or they’re at a hotel or camping in tents or living in RVs,” said Kate Needham, a veteran who co-founded the nonprofit Armed Forces Housing Advocates in May 2021.</p>



“I don’t think civilians really understand — they might think we’re living in free housing and just having a great time, making lots of money. And that’s not the case at all.”

Needham’s group supplies microgrants to military families in need, some of whom have resorted to food banks because their salaries do not cover such basics.

Reports of the housing squeeze military families face has alarmed members of Congress, who are pushing legislation that would force the Department of Defense to rethink how it handles housing.

A common complaint is that with rents soaring nationwide, the housing allowances, which vary by rank and are recalculated annually, haven’t kept pace with rental markets, even though they’re supposed to cover 95% of rental costs for the approximately two-thirds of active-duty personnel who, like the Martins, have to live off base.

According to a data analysis by The Associated Press of five of the most populous military bases in the U.S., housing allowances across all ranks have risen an average of 18.7% since January 2018. In that span, according to real estate company Zillow, rents have skyrocketed 43.9% in those markets: Carlsbad, California; Colorado Springs, Colorado; El Paso, Texas; Killeen, Texas, and Tacoma, Washington.

And because of how tough off-base markets are, on-base housing has become a hot commodity, with many bases having long waitlists.

Needham argues that the discrepancy between military housing allowances and the current market should alarm officials who are already struggling to recruit the next generation.

“If you can’t afford your job, why the hell would you stay in the job?” Needham said. “People are feeling abused by the military in so many different areas — the sexual assault issues, the lack of attention to medical care, the lack of attention to mental health. This is just another tick in the box that’s like, ‘Why would I join the military?’ And if you don’t have enough numbers, that’s a long-term national security problem.”

The Department of Defense did not comment on whether housing issues have become a retention concern. But defense officials said military housing offices monitor markets and offer tools to assist families, including referral services to help find “suitable, affordable housing, whether on or off-base.”

“The Department of Defense is committed to ensuring that service members and their families have access to affordable, quality housing within a reasonable commute of their assigned duty station,” it said.

At MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, housing allowances used to be in line with the local market. In January 2020, a senior airman without dependents received a monthly housing stipend of \$1,560, compared to the typical Tampa-area rent price of \$1,457, according to Zillow. But since then rent prices have exploded to \$2,118 per month in July, while a senior airman’s housing allowance is currently \$1,647.

With such a discrepancy and those living off-base facing notoriously long commutes, it’s no wonder that nearly all of MacDill’s 572 homes are full. As of last week, the base was at 95% capacity with a waitlist of 548 families, according to 2nd Lt. Kristin Nielsen, a MacDill public affairs officer.

“We are woefully underhoused,” said Stephanie Poynor, a Tampa property manager and wife of a retired serviceman. “The DoD needs to recognize how much our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coasties are really suffering in this market.”

Tampa real estate agent Renee Thompson, a relocation specialist, said it’s common for service members to rent homes that are an hour’s drive away from base.

“No homes in today’s market will even come close to the service member’s BAH,” said Thompson, who served in the Army. “It’s really disheartening.”

Nielsen said the annual housing allowance calculation takes six to nine months, making it a “lagging indicator of the current dynamic housing market.”

Officials are looking into adding on-base and off-base housing for MacDill, which has about 18,500 active-duty service members, she said. But because of the need for congressional budgetary approval, such long-term solutions are years away.

Even at rural Idaho’s Mountain Home Air Force Base, housing is extremely hard to come by, hampered by its location about 50 miles (80 kilometers) outside of Boise, one of the country’s hottest markets.

Col. Jamaal Mays, the 366th Fighter Wing commander for support, said housing allowances have increased, but not enough to keep pace with the spiking prices.

Brand new airmen are normally housed in dorms on base for about 36 months, but because demand for on-base housing is so high, they often only spend 18 to 20 months.

“They’re being pushed out on the local economy before they’re ready,” Mays said.

With few options, Mays said some airmen have started living in RV parks or moving much further away, including to Twin Falls, where they face commutes of up to two hours on sometimes snowy roads, hardly ideal if they have to respond to a base emergency, not to mention the fuel costs, he said.

Last fall, defense officials issued temporary BAH increases for October to December 2021 in 56 housing markets — including Mountain Home and Tampa. Yet even though rents have continued to rise, there’s no indication a similar bump is coming this fall.

Even if housing allowances do see a bump in January, that could end up taking away food-stamp eligibility for some military families who are struggling with food insecurity. That’s because the Agriculture Department counts BAH as income when determining a family’s eligibility for the SNAP government assistance program.

Frustrated by what she called the Defense Department’s lack of transparency into housing allowance calculations, U.S. Rep. Marilyn Strickland, D-Wash., has introduced a measure that would give the department one year to reexamine its process and report on how accurate the current system is.

BAH is like an “algorithm that needs updating on a regular basis,” said Strickland, whose district includes the massive Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma, where many military families struggle to find affordable homes. Her proposal is part of the national defense bill that passed the House in July and is awaiting Senate approval.

“The vast majority of people live off post, so this is incredibly urgent,” she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Downtown Seattle busy tourism season</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/downtown-seattle-tourism-nearing-pre-pandemic-levels/281-11504ad6-f004-4373-8599-9c280c596351">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/downtown-seattle-tourism-nearing-pre-pandemic-levels/281-11504ad6-f004-4373-8599-9c280c596351</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — <a href="#">New data</a> released by the <a href="#">Downtown Seattle Association</a> (DSA) shows the city has had a busy tourist season, with numbers closing in on pre-pandemic levels in a handful of economic recovery categories.</p> <p>"The comeback will be spectacular," is what the DSA said back in April 2020. Now more than two years later, that line is becoming a reality.</p>

"We hear anecdotally from people all the time that downtown's looking great, it's feeling great, there's a lot of activity and it's vibrant right now and what we want to do is put some numbers behind what people are seeing," said James Sido with the DSA.

The numbers released by DSA on Friday show downtown welcomed 2.9 million visitors in July, which was the highest monthly visitor total since the start of the pandemic. With a boom in visitors, the demand for hotel rooms in downtown reached 94 percent of 2019 levels.

"We're outpacing anything during the pandemic which is a great indicator," said Sido. "These numbers are not yet at 100 percent across the board because that would mean we're exceeding all the pre-pandemic metrics. But we are outpacing the activity that we've had over the last two years."

Sido believes this current pace is helping give downtown businesses a resurgence.

"That help paint a picture of visitors and economic activity and really when you look at the visitor count, you're looking at largely what we hope are active dollars," said Sido.

Despite the rising metrics, DSA said July saw Seattle office workers returning to downtown at only about 40 percent of 2019 totals. However, they did say that's the highest since the start of the pandemic and are hopeful those numbers along with others will continue to rise.

"It's here, it's still here, it's back and we think that people really sort of rediscovered what they love about downtown, what they love about Seattle," said Sido.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Kremlin faces rising domestic pressure</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/world/europe/ukraine-attacks-putin-war.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/world/europe/ukraine-attacks-putin-war.html</a>
GIST	<p>Nearly six months into the war in Ukraine, the Kremlin still refers to its invasion as a “special military operation” while trying to maintain a sense of normalcy at home.</p> <p>But a series of Ukrainian attacks in Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, is puncturing that narrative.</p> <p>And as Ukrainian attacks mount in the strategically and symbolically important territory, the damage is beginning to put domestic political pressure on the Kremlin, with criticism and debate about the war increasingly being unleashed on social media and underscoring that even what the Russian government considers to be Russian territory is not safe.</p> <p>On Saturday, a drone slammed into the headquarters of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, sending a plume of smoke over the port city of Sevastopol. Separately, in western Crimea, Russian troops launched anti-aircraft fire at unidentified targets, the region’s Russian governor said.</p> <p>Local Russian officials blamed the drone attack on Ukraine and urged residents and beachgoers not to panic, while insisting there had been no injuries and that Russian air defenses were functioning properly.</p> <p>But as images of anti-aircraft fire streaking through the blue Crimean sky ricocheted through social media, the visceral reality of war was becoming more and more apparent to Russians — many of whom have rallied behind the Kremlin’s line, hammered home in state media, that the “special military operation” to save Ukraine from Nazi domination is going smoothly and according to plan.</p> <p>“People are beginning to feel that the war is coming to them,” Andrei Kortunov, director general of the Russian International Affairs Council, a research organization close to the Russian government, said in a phone interview. “I think this is serious.”</p>

Ukraine has been engaged in a campaign to target Russian forces on the Crimean Peninsula. The attacks in Crimea appear to have begun in earnest on Aug. 9 with a strike on the Saki air base in which eight fighter jets were destroyed.

“One can literally feel in the air of Crimea that the occupation there is temporary, and Ukraine is returning,” President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine said on Saturday in his nightly address to the nation.

Kortunov said the Kremlin is likely to view the Ukrainian attacks not as a military threat but as “irritating,” showing Ukraine’s ability to threaten Russian lives deep behind the front lines. But it remained unclear how — or if — Putin would respond to the attacks, even as pro-Kremlin commentators called for retaliatory strikes.

Russia continues to retain military superiority, and the recent strikes in Crimea haven’t resulted in territorial gains for Ukraine. But they nevertheless appear to have dealt a psychological blow to Russia, undercutting the previous perception of Russian invincibility in a peninsula that exerts a strong hold on the Russian psyche.

Crimea is more than a pivotal military base. A sun-splashed resort and staging ground for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Crimea has particular symbolic resonance for Putin, who has called it Russia’s “holy land.”

Crimea is where czars and Politburo chairmen kept vacation homes. As home to Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, it also helps Russia exert control over the sea, including a naval blockade that has crippled Ukraine’s economy.

On the social network Telegram, one of Russia’s best-known state television hosts, Vladimir Solovyov, shared a post describing the attacks in Crimea and in Russian regions near the Ukrainian border as “some kind of surrealism.”

“Are we fighting or what are we doing?” the post by a pro-Kremlin military blogger asked. “Tough, cardinal measures must be taken, every day we pay for half-measures with human lives.”

While the military impact of the attacks may be minimal, there are mounting signs that local people are becoming unsettled by them, prompting officials to issue reassurances about their safety.

“I understand that many are worried,” the Russian governor of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said on his social media page on Saturday. “But that is exactly what the Ukrainian Reich” — a reference to Russia’s false characterization of Ukraine as a Nazi state — “wants to achieve.”

In an interview over a messaging app on Saturday, one resident of Sevastopol said she had never imagined that she would live to see the events of the last six months — both the war and the booms of anti-aircraft fire that she said she had heard herself recently. She said that her solution was to try to continue living her life and to avoid the news.

“When you read the news, chaos erupts in your head,” said the woman, Elena, 34, who requested her last name be withheld for her security. “You get the feeling that all around you everything is exploding and burning and that you are in hell.”

In a reflection of the challenges Moscow is facing, the Russian state news media also reported Friday that the Kremlin had replaced the commander of the Black Sea Fleet after a series of setbacks that include the loss of its flagship vessel, Moskva, in April. Ukraine said it had used Neptune missiles to sink the Moskva, a strike Russia dismissed as an onboard accident. It was the biggest warship lost in combat in decades.

The war also continued to reverberate outside Ukraine, including in ongoing concerns that the Kremlin was using Russia’s vast energy resources as a weapon to punish the West.

	<p>The Russian energy giant Gazprom said it would close the taps of its Nord Stream pipeline to Germany from Aug. 31 to Sept. 2 to replace a turbine with the help of its manufacturer, Siemens. Gazprom has said Western sanctions have slowed repairs, reducing gas flows by up to 60%. But Berlin has accused Gazprom of playing politics on Moscow's behalf.</p> <p>"The Russian side's justification is simply a pretext," Robert Habeck, Germany's economy minister, told reporters in Berlin in June. "It is obviously the strategy to unsettle and drive up prices."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/20 Disappointment LeBron James visit Seattle</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/nba/lebrons-visit-to-seattle-cut-short-due-to-safety-issues-for-players/">https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/nba/lebrons-visit-to-seattle-cut-short-due-to-safety-issues-for-players/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>One of the most anticipated days for Seattle hoops in the past 15 years ended as one of the most disappointing ones.</p> <p>The thrill of the greatest basketball player of his generation walking onto the court was overshadowed by him and a herd of other stars abruptly walking off it.</p> <p>Playing in the Emerald City for the first time since 2007, LeBron James wowed the Seattle Pacific University crowd for a quarter and a half in the CrowsOver — a summer Pro-Am League run by 206 basketball legend Jamal Crawford. But on a Saturday that included a maddening entrance "line," a pulled fire alarm, a warning to the crowd from a police officer and a scolding from Crawford himself — the game was called off with 5:47 left in the second quarter because of a dangerously slippery floor stemming from the humidity.</p> <p>Fans weren't happy. At least not most of them.</p> <p>Seattle residents DeMarcus Cousins (no relation to the NBA player) and Matthew Miller actually weren't too miffed. They were just pleased players such as James, Celtics All-Star Jayson Tatum, Nuggets standout Aaron Gordon, Huskies great Isaiah Thomas and the NBA's most recent No. 1 overall pick Paolo Banchero showed up for the event.</p> <p>"Overall, it was a good experience, even if it was just two quarters," said Cousins, before praising the event's host for recruiting the talent. "Shoutout to Jamal Crawford — he's a legend!"</p> <p>Saturday was supposed to be Crawford's finest hour as overseer of the CrowsOver, which has lured in players such as Kobe Bryant, Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving throughout the years. The league — which never charges admission — has been a summer sports staple at Seattle Pacific for years.</p> <p>When the big names come out — as Banchero and last draft's No. 2 pick Chet Holmgren did last month — lines form around Royal Brougham Pavilion long before the doors open. But LeBron is different. Much different. And it didn't look as if event organizers were prepared.</p> <p>Unique Cherry, who runs a basketball league in Tacoma, said that he was 198th in line at 3 a.m., while camping out Saturday morning. By 8 a.m., he said he was 400th in line. Folks would cut or join their friends and push the early birds to the back — but that was nothing compared to the scene a few hours later.</p> <p>When I showed up, there was no line. There was just a mob. No structure of any sort. Seattle resident Abdi Abdi said he began waiting at 5 a.m. and didn't get in until five minutes before LeBron's game was scheduled to begin, adding that many of the early comers were drowned out by folks who arrived just before the gates were supposed to open at noon and never got in.</p>

Part of the reason many adult fans were denied entry was because Crawford put an emphasis on kids getting in so they could see their heroes. But that didn't stop an array of basketball die-hards from being understandably upset.

"It's a very bad stain on Seattle's basketball community," Abdi said. "It was an [expletive] show."

It's easy to blame event organizers for not seeing this coming, and that's likely what many will do. The thing is, the CrowsOver has always been an informal event where fans just kind of show up and enjoy hoops. Hasn't stopped them from coming before.

Besides, it seemed as if James just decided he was going to play in it a couple of days before flying out to Seattle — leaving little time for mass preparations.

But the lines — outside and at the concession stands — were frustrating. And when a fan pulled a fire alarm, it almost ended the event.

At one point, Crawford got on the mic and told the thousands in the stands to show more class in welcoming the likes of James and others to their city. A police officer later got on the mic to tell the fans — many of whom were overcrowding the baseline and other parts of the court — that one more mishap would end the event.

The game carried on — with Tatum knocking down five threes and LeBron throwing down a monster jam along with other highlights.

Unfortunately, it just got way too humid in Royal Brougham, causing way too much moisture on the court and leading to Crawford calling off the game for the players' safety. Part of the reason for the excessive heat? Security couldn't open the front doors to let air in from outside due to fear of fans barging in.

Afterward, former Sonics coach Lenny Wilkens walked outside and addressed the sadness of the situation.

"I was disappointed for Jamal, he really goes through a lot to put this on," he said. "Not a happy ending, but at least [the fans] did get to see a little bit."

True. But far too little.

CrowsOver security guard Dedriq Trinide was obviously dismayed by the events of the day. He said he is a huge James fan, but fears Saturday might end up deterring him and other stars from coming out to Seattle in the future.

Funny, the aforementioned Cousins said that seeing LeBron play in Seattle was "a once in a lifetime opportunity."

After all that transpired, that's probably true.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Nicaragua escalates crackdown on dissent</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/nicaraguan-police-detain-catholic-bishop-other-priests-in-raid">https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/nicaraguan-police-detain-catholic-bishop-other-priests-in-raid</a>
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY (AP) — Nicaraguan police on Friday raided the residence of a Roman Catholic bishop critical of President Daniel Ortega's administration, detaining him and several other priests in a dramatic escalation of tensions between the church and a government increasingly intolerant of dissent.</p> <p>The pre-dawn raid came after Nicaraguan authorities had accused Matagalpa Bishop Rolando Álvarez of "organizing violent groups" and inciting them "to carry out acts of hate against the population."</p>



President Daniel Ortega's government has moved systematically against voices of dissent, arresting dozens of opposition leaders last year, including seven potential candidates to challenge him for the presidency. They were sentenced to prison this year in quick trials closed to the public.

The congress, dominated by Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front, has ordered the closure of more than 1,000 nongovernmental organizations, including Mother Teresa's charity.

Early Friday, the Matagalpa diocese posted on social media, "#SOS #Urgente. At this time the National Police have entered the Episcopal rectory of our Matagalpa diocese."

The National Police confirmed the detentions in a statement later, saying that the operation was carried out to allow "the citizenry and families of Matagalpa to recover normalcy."

"For several days a positive communication from the Matagalpa diocese was awaited with a lot of patience, prudence and sense of responsibility, that never materialized," the statement said. "With the continuation of the destabilizing and provocative activities, the aforementioned public order operation became necessary."

It did not mention specific charges.

Álvarez was being held under guard at a house in Managua, where he had been allowed to meet with relatives and Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes, the police statement said.

The others who were taken with Álvarez — they did not specify who or how many — were still being processed, police said.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights condemned the detentions and called for the immediate release of those held.

Edwin Román, a Nicaraguan parish priest exiled in the United States said via Twitter: "MY GOD! How outrageous, they have taken Monsignor Rolando Álvarez, with the priests who were with him."

Álvarez has been a key religious voice in discussions of Nicaragua's future since 2018, when a wave of protests against Ortega's government led to a sweeping crackdown on opponents.

"We hope there would be a series of electoral reforms, structural changes to the electoral authority — free, just and transparent elections, international observation without conditions," Álvarez said a month after the protests broke out. "Effectively the democratization of the country."

At the time, a priest in Álvarez's diocese had been wounded in the arm by shrapnel while trying to separate protesters and police in Matagalpa.

Álvarez has kept up such calls for democracy for the past four years, infuriating Ortega and Murillo.

Manuel Orozco, an expert on Nicaragua at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, said that Álvarez posed a threat as an obstacle and a symbol to Ortega.

"Nicaraguans are very loyal to the church," he said. "In a survey I did last year, 70% of Nicaraguans say that to them, the political opinion of the religious authority at the national or the parochial level was important in shaping their political views."

"(Álvarez's) narrative, it's based on the religious script, the biblical script about opposing the oppressor," Orozco said. "And he makes allusions not to incite violence or to call for resistance, but he does say there is oppression."

Orozco said the government is betting its pressure on the church won't bring a "proportional response" by the international community. "And so they continue to push the envelope because they don't see that short of a military invasion, there is not going to be anything that can stop them."

Friday's arrests follow weeks of elevated tensions between the church and Ortega's government, which has had a complicated relationship with Nicaragua's predominant religion and its leaders for more than four decades.

The former Marxist guerrilla infuriated the Vatican in the 1980s, but gradually forged an alliance with the church as he moved to regain the presidency in 2007 after a long period out of power. Now he appears to once again see political benefit in direct confrontation.

Ortega initially invited the church to mediate talks with protesters in 2018, but has since taken a more aggressive position.

Days before last year's presidential elections, which he won for a fourth consecutive term with his strongest opponents jailed, he accused the bishops of having drafted a political proposal in 2018 on behalf "of the terrorists, at the service of the Yankees. ... These bishops are also terrorists."

In March, Nicaragua expelled the papal nuncio, the Vatican's top diplomat in Nicaragua.

The government had previously shut down eight radio stations and one television channel in Matagalpa province, north of Managua. Seven of the radio stations were run by the church.

The Aug. 5 announcement that Álvarez was under investigation came just hours after first lady and Vice President Rosario Murillo criticized "sins against spirituality" and "the exhibition of hate" in an apparent reference to Álvarez.

The Archdiocese of Managua had earlier expressed support for Álvarez. The conference of Latin American Catholic bishops decried what it called a "siege" of priests and bishops, the expulsion of members of religious communities and "constant harassment" targeting the Nicaraguan people and the church.

The Vatican remained silent about the investigation of Álvarez for nearly two weeks, drawing criticism from some Latin American human rights activists and intellectuals.

That silence was broken last Friday when Monsignor Juan Antonio Cruz, the Vatican's permanent observer to the Organization of American States, expressed concern about the situation and asked both parties to "seek ways of understanding."

The Vatican again offered no comment Friday and didn't report the news immediately on its in-house media portal. While staying mum, apparently in hopes of not inflaming tensions, the Vatican has been publishing regular expressions of solidarity from Latin American bishops in recent days on its Vatican News site.

The president of Nicaragua's Episcopal Conference did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The huge street protests across Nicaragua in 2018 called for Ortega to step down. Ortega maintained the protests were a coup attempt carried out with foreign backing and the support of the church.

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HEADLINE	08/19 Russia holds war games in Venezuela
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/russia-holding-war-games-in-venezuela-sending-alarming-signals-throughout-latin-america/ar-AA10Qza7">https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/russia-holding-war-games-in-venezuela-sending-alarming-signals-throughout-latin-america/ar-AA10Qza7</a>

Snipers from Russia and other countries hostile to the United States are competing in war games being held this week in Venezuela in events described as Olympic games for soldiers that were organized not only to show that Moscow still has friends but also that some of them are in Latin America.

The international war games have been held yearly since 2015, following Russia's annexation of Crimea, and Venezuela has participated from its beginning, but this year's games are the first held in Latin America, and include participants from Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua.

Forces from Burma, Belarus, Abkhazia, Uzbekistan, China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia, among others, also participate in the competitions. These are nations that "daily condemn imperialist aggression against the peoples," Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López declared as he inaugurated the games on Monday.

The games are held at a time when Russia is being harshly criticized for its military incursion into Ukraine, an invasion that triggered severe economic sanctions against Moscow by Europe and the United States and a chorus of condemnations around the world.

This year's games seek to remind the world that Russia still has friends, but observers believe that the fact that they are being held in Venezuela could have a longer-lasting effect.

"In a sense, this seeks to normalize (and pave the way for) a larger military presence in Latin America," said Joseph Humire, executive director of the Center for a Secure Free Society, a Washington-based think tank. These games could open the door "to larger military operations and games in the future" involving not only Russia, but also China and Iran.

The region already saw this a few years ago with the first flights of Iranian planes to Venezuela. The planes, whose contents remain a mystery, initially caused great alarm in Venezuela and among observers of the Nicolás Maduro regime, but then became so frequent that they ultimately went unnoticed, Humire said.

"It is already normal for Venezuelans and today there are flights from Iran that are constantly arriving, that are participating in activities that are worrisome and alarming but that people are not paying attention anymore," Humire said.

The games are held at the Terepaima Military Fort, located in the central-western state of Lara, where specialized sniper teams from participating countries compete for bragging rights.

Although the numbers of soldiers present in Venezuela have not been disclosed, experts estimate that they could add up to hundreds of troops, given that in previous war games countries participating neared 30.

The competitions — which in the past have tested detachments of tanks, artillery and amphibious operations — are scheduled to last until Aug. 27 and show the willingness of the Caracas regime to turn Venezuela into a platform for a series of anti-American activities, said Evan Ellis, professor of Latin American studies for the U.S. Army War College.

"Venezuela wanted to host these games, wanted to be one of the organizers and host this party and the host of other anti-American activities," Ellis said.

Venezuela's relationship with Russia is already extensive and the games seeks to expand it further, added retired Venezuelan National Guard colonel Isidro Pérez Villalobos. But the games also seek to promote Moscow's and other participating countries' arms sales in the region, although not necessarily to regular armed forces, he added.

The event "serves as a conclave for merchants of sophisticated weapons to transnational terrorist organizations that operate in Latin America with the support of the Venezuelan regime," said the Venezuelan military officer.

	<p>In a certain way, the games also highlight Maduro’s diplomatic game with the United States, which on one hand shows his willingness to participate in talks with Washington to improve relations while seeking to strengthen his relations with Moscow.</p> <p>And that the United States is willing to engage Maduro shows its shortsightedness when dealing with Venezuela and in not paying sufficient attention to Russia’s, China’s and Iran’s activities in the region, Pérez Villalobos said.</p> <p>“In the United States they downplay Russia’s presence in Venezuela, but they are everywhere in the country,” said Pérez Villalobos . “They are arms suppliers, they are oil and economic partners, they are political allies and now they sponsor military competitions.”</p> <p>By holding these games in Venezuela, he said, “Russia is telling the United States: ‘I can also come to your backyard. You want to get into the Baltic countries, in Ukraine, and in the geo-historical spaces of Russia? Well, I also get into your spaces.’”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Study: Covid raises brain disorders risks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/08/19/long-covid-brain-effects/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/08/19/long-covid-brain-effects/</a>
GIST	<p>A study <a href="#">published this week</a> in the journal Lancet Psychiatry showed increased risks of some brain disorders two years after infection with the coronavirus, shedding new light on the long-term neurological and psychiatric aspects of the virus.</p> <p>The analysis, conducted by researchers at the University of Oxford and drawing on health records data from more than 1 million people around the world, found that while the risks of many common psychiatric disorders returned to normal within a couple of months, people remained at increased risk for dementia, epilepsy, psychosis and cognitive deficit (or brain fog) two years after contracting covid. Adults appeared to be at particular risk of lasting brain fog, a common complaint among coronavirus survivors.</p> <p>The study’s findings were a mix of good and bad news, said Paul Harrison, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Oxford and the senior author of the study. Among the reassuring aspects was the quick resolution of symptoms such as depression and anxiety.</p> <p>“I was surprised and relieved by how quickly the psychiatric sequelae subsided,” Harrison said.</p> <p>David Putrino, director of rehabilitation innovation at Mount Sinai Health System in New York, who has been studying the lasting impacts of the coronavirus since early in the pandemic, said the study revealed some very troubling outcomes.</p> <p>“It allows us to see without a doubt the emergence of significant neuropsychiatric sequelae in individuals that had covid and far more frequently than those who did not,” he said.</p> <p>Because it focused only on the neurological and psychiatric effects of the coronavirus, the study authors and others emphasized that it is not strictly <a href="#">long-covid research</a>.</p> <p>“It would be overstepping and unscientific to make the immediate assumption that everybody in the [study] cohort had long covid,” Putrino said. But the study, he said, “does inform long-covid research.”</p> <p>Between 7 million and 23 million people in the United States, according to recent government estimates, have long covid — a catchall term for a wide range of symptoms including fatigue, breathlessness and anxiety that persist weeks and months after the acute infection has subsided. Those numbers are expected to rise as the coronavirus settles in as an endemic disease.</p> <p><b>What is long covid?</b></p>

The study was led by Maxime Taquet, a senior research fellow at the University of Oxford who specializes in using big data to shed light on psychiatric disorders.

The researchers matched almost 1.3 million patients with a diagnosis of covid-19 between Jan. 20, 2020, and April 13, 2022, with an equal number of patients who had other respiratory diseases during the pandemic. The data, provided by electronic health records network TriNetX, came largely from the United States but also included data from Australia, Britain, Spain, Bulgaria, India, Malaysia and Taiwan.

The study group, which included 185,000 children and 242,000 older adults, revealed that risks differed according to age, with people 65 and older at greatest risk of lasting neuropsychiatric effects.

For people between the ages of 18 and 64, a particularly significant increased risk was of persistent brain fog, affecting 6.4 percent of people who had had covid compared with 5.5 percent in the control group.

Six months after infection, children were not found to be at increased risk of mood disorders, although they remained at greater risk of brain fog, insomnia, stroke and epilepsy. None of those effects were permanent for children. With epilepsy, which is extremely rare, the increased risk was larger.

The study found that 4.5 percent of older people developed dementia in the two years after infection, compared with 3.3 percent of the control group. That 1.2-point increase in a diagnosis as damaging as dementia is particularly worrisome, the researchers said.

The study's reliance on a trove of de-identified electronic health data raised some cautions, particularly considering the tumultuous time of the pandemic. Tracking long-term outcomes may be hard when patients may have sought care through many different health systems, including some outside the TriNetX network.

"I personally find it impossible to judge the validity of the data or the conclusions when the data source is shrouded in mystery and the sources of the data are kept secret by legal agreement," said Harlan Krumholz, a Yale scientist who has developed an online platform where patients can enter their own health data.

Taquet said the researchers used several means of assessing the data, including making sure it reflected what was already known about the pandemic, such as the drop in death rates during the omicron wave.

Also, Taquet said, "the validity of data is not going to be better than validity of diagnosis. If clinicians make mistakes, we will make the same mistakes."

The study follows earlier research from the same group, which reported last year that a third of covid patients experienced mood disorders, strokes or dementia six months after infection.

While cautioning that it is impossible to make full comparisons among the effects of recent variants, including omicron and its subvariants, which are currently driving infections, and those that were prevalent a year or more ago, the researchers outlined some initial findings: Even though omicron caused less severe immediate symptoms, the longer-term neurological and psychiatric outcomes appeared similar to the delta waves, indicating that the burden on the world's health-care systems might continue even with less-severe variants.

Hannah Davis, a co-founder of the Patient-Led Research Collaborative, which studies long covid, said that finding was meaningful. "It goes against the narrative that omicron is more mild for long covid, which is not based on science," Davis said.

"We see this all the time," Putrino said. "The general conversation keeps leaving out long covid. The severity of initial infection doesn't matter when we talk about long-term sequelae that ruin people's lives."

HEADLINE	08/20 China Xi had asked Biden stop Pelosi visit
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/08/20/nancy-pelosi-biden-taiwan/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/08/20/nancy-pelosi-biden-taiwan/</a>
GIST	<p>Just days before House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was expected to visit Taiwan, Chinese President Xi Jinping had a request of President Biden: Find a way to keep Pelosi from visiting.</p> <p>Xi's request in a July 28 call with Biden, described by a senior White House official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive conversation, followed myriad warnings Chinese officials made to U.S. counterparts of what China might do in retaliation for Pelosi's visit to the self-governing island that Beijing considers part of its territory.</p> <p>But Biden told Xi he could not oblige, explaining that Congress was an independent branch of government and that Pelosi (D-Calif.), as with other members of Congress, would make her own decisions about foreign trips, the official said. Biden also warned Xi against taking provocative and coercive actions if the House speaker were to travel to Taiwan, the official said.</p> <p>Even as they defended Pelosi's right to visit, however, top U.S. officials harbored deep concerns about the trip, according to several senior administration and White House officials, most of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk candidly. The United States had seen indications over the last several months that China was considering unprecedented military activity across the Taiwan Strait, and officials had seen signs that China would use Pelosi's visit as a pretext to act, the senior officials said.</p> <p>U.S. officials also worried about the timing of Pelosi's visit, which would come shortly before Xi sought to secure his third term in power, and the geopolitical ramifications that could follow.</p> <p>Despite the Defense Department, the United States Indo-Pacific Command and White House national security officials laying out the risks, Pelosi proceeded with the trip, which prompted an unprecedented military response from China that included firing missiles into the waters around Taiwan and over the island — some missiles landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone — and military drills that crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait.</p> <p>House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) plans to visit Taiwan may disrupt the careful relationship between China, Taiwan and the United States. (Video: Julie Yoon, John Farrell/The Washington Post) Pelosi's Taiwan trip a culmination of decades of challenging China</p> <p>Pelosi's visit, which some analysts criticized as a legacy-burnishing move for her, frustrated administration officials and deepened tensions between the administration and the powerful House speaker responsible for securing the president's legislative agenda.</p> <p>Yet Pelosi was unmoved by White House officials' arguments. Administration officials told her China was likely to escalate its action in the region regardless of whether she visited but could move up the timeline for doing so, two people briefed on the conversations said. Pelosi defended the trip as necessary to demonstrate support for Taiwan, as well as democracy over autocracy, and hit back at critics who said she was focused on her legacy. Taiwanese officials had also made clear they were eager for Pelosi to visit and welcomed her arrival with fanfare.</p> <p>"The support for preventing Taiwan from being isolated and preserving the status quo is bipartisan and bicameral," Pelosi said in a statement to The Washington Post. "This respect for Taiwan and rejection of violence is shared by the President as witnessed by his recent statements."</p> <p>She added: "Any attack on me personally is not associated with the President but with some smaller anonymous voices within the administration who endangered the security of our visit by leaking the trip even before it was determined that we would indeed visit Taiwan. These small anonymous voices cannot be allowed to indicate any division between the White House and the Congress on Taiwan."</p> <p>White House officials denied sharing with the media details about the trip and several officials said they found the pre-trip publicity unhelpful, particularly because they were having private conversations with</p>



the speaker at the time about the potential risks and did not want word of her visit to get out before it was finalized.

“Members of Congress have gone to Taiwan for decades and will continue to do so. Speaker Pelosi had every right to go and her visit is consistent with our long-standing one-China policy,” said Adrienne Watson, a spokeswoman for the National Security Council.

China’s anticipated reaction to Pelosi’s trip prompted intensive diplomacy by the White House and State Department to reassure allies the United States was not seeking a conflict with China nor changing its longstanding policies. Administration officials assured allies in the region they would not respond in kind to China’s bellicose military exercises and would defend allies in the Indo-Pacific. But the trip has created additional challenges in the U.S.-China relationship, which was already at one of its lowest points in decades, as China said it would cancel or suspend dialogue with the United States on issues including climate change, military relations and anti-drug efforts. U.S. officials have said China is punishing the world by halting climate talks, including vulnerable nations in the Indo-Pacific.

So far, administration officials have successfully aligned partners in the region and elsewhere — including in Europe — in condemning China’s reaction to the trip, which the U.S. and its allies have said was outsize and unprecedented. U.S. officials briefed allies on how they expected China to react and the live-fire exercises it could execute to intimidate Taiwan and how the United States would respond, a White House official said, to ensure the U.S. and its allies were “prepared to speak with one voice” when China did escalate.

Officials said they will conduct “robust diplomatic engagement” in the coming weeks and months “to preserve peace and stability across the Strait and continue our work to align with allies and partners on China,” said the White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Chinese officials made clear they saw Pelosi’s visit as an unprecedented provocation and viewed it as a U.S. attempt to erode the one-China policy, a long-standing agreement in which the United States acknowledges — without recognizing — Beijing’s claim that there is only one China. While Biden and other White House officials stressed to Beijing that Congress is a separate branch of government and the trip was not state-sanctioned, Chinese officials viewed Pelosi — a member of Biden’s political party and second in line to the presidency — as a part of Biden’s political apparatus. They also noted she traveled on U.S. military aircraft, which would not have been possible without sign-off from the administration.

“The U.S. claims that China is escalating the situation, China is overreacting, and China is using Pelosi’s visit as a pretext to establish a ‘new normal.’ But a basic fact is, the U.S. side took the first step to provoke China on the Taiwan question,” Chinese Ambassador Qin Gang said in a briefing with reporters this week, noting China officials expressed opposition to the visit through various channels. “We had warned that if Pelosi made the visit, there would be very serious consequences. China would firmly and forcefully respond. To our regret, the United States chose not to listen.”

### **Separation of powers at play**

Pelosi had made clear to White House officials that she was willing to reconsider her trip under two conditions: if the president directly asked the 82-year-old lawmaker not to go or if Taiwan’s president withdrew her invitation. She would consider acquiescing to a request from Biden, she told officials, but Pelosi also made clear she would publicize that she was scuttling her trip to Taiwan at the president’s behest.

That put Biden — who served 36 years in the Senate and believes strongly in the separation of powers — in a difficult position. If it became public that he did not want Pelosi to visit, it would risk making Biden and the United States look weak on China, experts said. In the end, Biden never spoke to Pelosi about her trip despite Xi’s request that he prevent it from happening. In an offhand comment, Biden told reporters shortly before Pelosi’s expected visit that military officials believed the trip was not a good idea.

White House officials declined to elaborate on the specifics of the Biden-Xi conversation, but they pointed to comments John Kirby, a spokesman for the National Security Council, made shortly before Pelosi traveled to Taiwan.

“The president, in his conversation with President Xi, made clear that Congress is an independent branch of government and that Speaker Pelosi makes her own decisions, as other members of Congress do, about their overseas travel,” Kirby said.

The last House speaker to visit Taiwan was Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) in 1997, though arguably that took place under different circumstances. China was not the global superpower it is today, and Gingrich was not the same political party as then-President Bill Clinton.

Many members have visited Taiwan in recent years, and Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) led a congressional delegation to Taiwan this week.

Even so, Chinese officials made clear they saw Pelosi’s trip as a provocation from the U.S. government.

“She went there with the connivance and arrangement of the U.S. government,” Qin said during his briefing. “This has seriously violated the one-China principle, gravely infringed on China’s sovereignty, greatly interfered in China’s internal affairs, seriously violated the commitments made by the U.S., and severely undermined peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”

Yet Biden himself has at times made comments on Taiwan that have put Chinese officials on edge. He has not always struck the delicate balance that the United States’ “strategic ambiguity” requires when it comes to the question of Taiwan’s defense. In May, while making his first presidential trip to Asia, Biden told reporters the United States would defend Taiwan militarily if China attacked.

“The idea that it can be taken by force, just taken by force, is just not appropriate,” Biden said. “It would dislocate the entire region and be another action similar to what happened in Ukraine. And so it’s a burden that’s even stronger.”

White House officials quickly clarified that the U.S. position on Taiwan and the one-China policy had not changed. But Biden’s comments in May were not the first time he suggested the U.S. would come to Taiwan’s defense if China attacked.

### **Pelosi’s legacy on China**

Pelosi has defended her trip to Taiwan, arguing there is ongoing “struggle between autocracy and democracy in the world,” a favorite phrase of the president, and the trip was “to show the world the success of the people of Taiwan, the courage to change their own country, to become more democratic.”

Taiwanese officials condemned China’s actions and said it needed to be held accountable. They said Taiwan would not be intimidated and welcomed Pelosi’s visit as well as other signals of support from the U.S. and other countries.

On Wednesday, the U.S. and Taiwan announced they are set to begin formal trade negotiations, and if the trade talks are a success, it will further bolster ties between the two nations while rankling China.

Pelosi has a long and contentious history with China and has long prided herself on standing up to Beijing. Yet critics of the visit said her trip ended up creating more problems for Taiwan and the United States.

Ian Bremmer, the president of Eurasia Group, said Pelosi “had wanted to visit Taiwan before her retirement as part of her personal legacy.” Pelosi has said she is running for reelection in November, but she is widely expected to step down soon.

	<p>“The outcome of the Pelosi trip, which in my view did not accomplish anything for the United States, ended up being the Chinese working to marginally improve the balance of forces between the West and China over Taiwan in Beijing’s favor and I don’t think anyone wants that,” Bremmer said.</p> <p>Drew Hammill, a spokesman for Pelosi, said: “The Speaker’s legacy on China needs no enhancement.”</p> <p>The rising tensions following her trip, however, have created anxiety for many countries in the region, said a senior Asian diplomat, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private conversations. The uncertainties surrounding the U.S.-China relationship are a significant cause for concern for countries in the region, the diplomat said, pointing to the recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministerial meeting in Cambodia, the first in-person meeting of the group in three years, where the agenda was “hijacked” by the escalating tensions between U.S. and China.</p> <p>“There is a danger, even though I know you do not want to go to war, but there is a danger of accidents and miscalculations,” Singapore’s minister for foreign affairs Vivian Balakrishnan told reporters after the ASEAN meeting. “For what it is worth, we repeat the appeal that for the rest of us in Southeast Asia, we actually want temperatures to come down. It is actually very important for Southeast Asia for China and the United States to get along.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Wendy’s removes lettuce from sandwiches</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/wendys-removes-lettuce-from-sandwiches-amid-e-coli-outbreak-11661014094?mod=hp_lead_pos6">https://www.wsj.com/articles/wendys-removes-lettuce-from-sandwiches-amid-e-coli-outbreak-11661014094?mod=hp_lead_pos6</a>
GIST	<p>Fast-food chain <a href="#">Wendy’s Co.</a> isn’t serving lettuce on sandwiches in restaurants in three states, following complaints of illness from some customers who ate at those locations.</p> <p>Wendy’s restaurants in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania won’t put lettuce on burgers and sandwiches while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tries to find the origin of a recent <a href="#">E. coli outbreak that has sickened at least 37 people</a>, the agency said.</p> <p>As of Friday, two people in Pennsylvania, 15 in Michigan and 19 in Ohio had been infected, the CDC said.</p> <p>One person in Indiana also got sick, according to the agency, which didn’t link that report to Wendy’s. The number of <b>infected</b> people is likely higher than 37, the CDC said, as some people recover without medical care or testing.</p> <p>The CDC said it hasn’t yet determined if romaine lettuce is the source of the outbreak. Investigators are also trying to determine whether the romaine used at Wendy’s was served or sold at other businesses.</p> <p>Wendy’s has voluntarily taken the “precautionary measure” of pulling the item from its sandwiches, the agency said.</p> <p>The CDC said there is no evidence that romaine lettuce sold in grocery stores is tainted. It isn’t advising people to stop eating at Wendy’s restaurants or to stop consuming romaine lettuce.</p> <p>The lettuce used by the fast-food chain in its salads is different from the romaine used in sandwiches, Wendy’s said in a statement.</p> <p>“We are fully cooperating with public health authorities on their ongoing investigation of the regional E. coli outbreak reported in certain midwestern states,” the statement said.</p> <p>The CDC started investigating a possible E. coli outbreak around July 26, when people began reporting that they had fallen ill.</p>

	<p>Symptoms—including vomiting, diarrhea and severe stomach cramps—<a href="#">usually start</a> three to four days after someone swallows E. coli.</p> <p>To prevent getting sick from the bacteria, the CDC advises people to wash their hands and cook their food to a safe temperature that can kill germs, among other <a href="#">food-safety measures</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 On record pace: overseas jobs return home</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-companies-on-pace-to-bring-home-record-number-of-overseas-jobs-11660968061?mod=hp_lead_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-companies-on-pace-to-bring-home-record-number-of-overseas-jobs-11660968061?mod=hp_lead_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>U.S. companies are bringing workforces and supply chains home at a historic pace.</p> <p>American companies are on pace to reshore, or return to the U.S., nearly 350,000 jobs this year, according to a report expected Friday from the Reshoring Initiative. That would be the highest number on record since the group began tracking the data in 2010. The Reshoring Initiative lobbies for bringing manufacturing jobs back to the U.S.</p> <p>Over the past month, dozens of companies have said they had plans to build new factories or start new manufacturing projects in the U.S. Idaho-based Micron Technology Inc. announced a \$40 billion expansion of its current headquarters and investments in memory manufacturing. Ascend Elements said it would build a \$1 billion lithium-ion battery materials facility in Kentucky. South Korean conglomerate SK Group said it would invest \$22 billion in a new packaging facility, electric vehicle charging systems, and hydrogen production in Kentucky and Tennessee.</p> <p>“We think it’ll be a long-term trend,” said Jill Carey Hall, U.S. equity strategist at Bank of America Corp. “Before Covid there was...a little uptick but obviously Covid was one big trend and you’ve seen a continued big jump up this year.”</p> <p>To be sure, globalization <a href="#">has been a tailwind for investors and large companies</a> for much of the past 30 years, particularly U.S. firms. Increased trade across borders boosted profits and productivity and allowed countries to focus on the goods and services they were best equipped to produce. Globalization has also provided multinational companies with new customers and new pools of low-cost labor.</p> <p>But the Covid-19 pandemic, which snarled supply chains worldwide, pushed many executives to think about bringing their business closer to home. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which <a href="#">upended commodities markets</a>, is another motivator. So is the possibility of a conflict between China and Taiwan, <a href="#">which produces the chips</a> used in smartphones, personal computers and cars.</p> <p>The U.S. government is also luring companies back. The Chips and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, both passed this month, <a href="#">provide tax breaks and other incentives</a> for building and investing in manufacturing centers for goods such as semiconductors, electric vehicles and pharmaceuticals.</p> <p>Investors’ increased focus on carbon emissions also has bolstered the need for closer-to-home supply chains. Carbon pricing mechanisms and taxes recently implemented in the European Union and elsewhere will further reduce the appeal of extensive cross-border supply chains, Barclays economists wrote in a recent note to clients.</p> <p>Barclays found that large S&amp;P 500 companies are recruiting more in their home countries and slowing cross-border M&amp;A activity.</p> <p>“Globalization is in retreat,” the firm’s U.K.-based economists Christian Keller and Akash Utsav wrote.</p> <p>The 350,000 reshored jobs expected this year would far exceed the roughly 265,000 jobs added in 2021 and would be more than 50 times the 6,000 jobs reshored to the U.S. in 2010. The Reshoring Initiative tallies company announcements of head-count increases for positions that were previously held in other</p>

	<p>countries, new positions in industries that had little to no U.S. presence and positions created in the U.S. from direct investment by companies based in other countries.</p> <p>On corporate earnings calls in the second quarter, the term “reshoring” was mentioned nearly 12 times as much as it had been in the second quarter of 2019, according to data from Bank of America.</p> <p>However, the broad shift might not be an outright win for blue-collar American workers. Increased capital spending suggests many companies could be looking to replace overseas workers with technology rather than with U.S.-based workers, according to Bank of America. Capital expenditures are often investments in equipment or technology that automate the tasks of workers.</p> <p>“There’s no question that companies, when they bring jobs back, they know they’re going to be paying three to five times as much for labor,” said Harry Moser, the founder and president of the Reshoring Initiative. “Therefore they have to automate.”</p> <p>North American companies ordered a record 11,595 robots, worth \$646 million, in the first quarter, putting 2022 on pace to surpass last year’s record numbers, according to the Association for Advancing Automation.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 UN: Horn of Africa drought ‘catastrophic’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/drought-in-horn-of-africa-places-22m-people-at-risk-of-starvation-says-un">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/drought-in-horn-of-africa-places-22m-people-at-risk-of-starvation-says-un</a>
GIST	<p>The number of people at risk of starvation in the drought-ravaged Horn of <a href="#">Africa</a> has increased to 22 million, the UN’s world food programme (WFP) says.</p> <p>Years of insufficient rainfall across Kenya, Somalia and <a href="#">Ethiopia</a> have caused the worst drought in 40 years and conditions akin to famine in the hardest-hit areas, aid groups say.</p> <p>An unprecedented four failed rainy seasons has killed millions of livestock, destroyed crops and forced 1.1 million people from their homes in search of food and water.</p> <p>“The world needs to act now to protect the most vulnerable communities from the threat of widespread famine in the Horn of Africa,” the WFP executive director, David Beasley, said on Friday.</p> <p>“There is still no end in sight to this drought crisis, so we must get the resources needed to save lives and stop people plunging into catastrophic levels of hunger and starvation.”</p> <p>At the start of 2022, WFP warned that 13 million people across the three countries faced starvation, and appealed for donors to open their purses at a time of great need.</p> <p>But funds were slow in coming, with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine among other crises drawing attention from the disaster in the Horn, humanitarian workers said.</p> <p>Russia’s invasion also sent global food and fuel prices soaring, making aid delivery more expensive.</p> <p>By the middle of the year, when rain failed to appear again in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, the number in extreme need soared to 20 million and warnings of famine grew more urgent.</p> <p>WFP says that by September at least 22 million people could face starvation.</p> <p>“This number will continue to climb, and the severity of hunger will deepen if the next rainy season ... fails and the most vulnerable people do not receive humanitarian relief,” WFP said in a statement.</p>

	<p>“Needs will remain high into 2023 and famine is now a serious risk, particularly in Somalia”, where nearly half the population of 15 million is seriously hungry.</p> <p>WFP said \$418m was needed over the next six months to help the worst-off.</p> <p>Last month, the United States announced \$1.2bn in emergency food and malnutrition treatment to help avert famine in the Horn of Africa, and urged other nations to do more.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 New Zealand floods face years to clean up?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/19/new-zealand-floods-could-take-years-to-clean-up-with-1200-people-displaced">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/19/new-zealand-floods-could-take-years-to-clean-up-with-1200-people-displaced</a>
GIST	<p>Torrential downpours that have battered New Zealand for four days straight have caused floods that could take years to clean up and displaced at least 1,200 people from their homes in the top of the South Island.</p> <p>Friday’s rain comes on top of weeks of wet weather and is worsening conditions in New Zealand’s already sodden landscape. Experts have attributed the unseasonably wet weather to a narrow stream of water vapour, or “atmospheric river”, sitting above the country.</p> <p>Evacuated residents in Nelson, a city with a population of more than 50,000 that has been particularly hard hit, were told they were unlikely to be able to return home on Friday, leaving 1,200 people from 411 households displaced. Nelson’s mayor, Rachel Reese, told media it would take years to recover from the flooding, which has badly damaged roads and homes.</p> <p>Local Civil Defence group controller Alec Louverdis struggled to hide his emotion over the damage he had witnessed, including extensive slips. “The damage that I saw in Nelson was heartbreaking,” he said. “We are years away from a recovery.”</p> <p>Some residents are being warned they may not be able to return to their homes, which will be damaged beyond repair. Communities in other areas, including the north-western tip of the Marlborough Sounds, had been cut off and were running low on supplies.</p> <p>The bad weather shows little sign of letting up and the threat of landslides is hampering efforts to safely return people to their homes. Most evacuees had gone to stay with family and friends, Louverdis said.</p> <p>Another 130mm of rain is expected in the region on Friday night, on top of at least 172mm that has fallen since Tuesday in Nelson – well above its average rainfall for the whole of August of 80mm.</p> <p>Paradise Peak in the Tasman recorded an extraordinary 795mm of rain from midday Tuesday to 9am Friday, while Dawson Falls in Taranaki region recorded just over a metre, according to Metservice.</p> <p>Some Taranaki residents had voluntarily evacuated their homes due to high river flows.</p> <p>The Civil Defence is monitoring river levels, but is hopeful it will not have to close the Waitara town bridge that crosses into Waitara town. Schools had sent their children home fearing a bridge closure could leave families split up on opposite sides of the river, RNZ reported.</p> <p>The top of the North Island is also bearing the brunt of the deluge, with multiple roads and state highways closed due to slips, fallen trees and flooding. Some residents have also evacuated their homes in the small town of Kaitiāia.</p> <p>More than 40 locations have had record, or near-record rainfall totals this winter, said Dr Daniel Kingston, a senior geography lecturer at the University of Otago.</p>

	<p>“That is linked to a higher than usual number of atmospheric rivers occurring. Normally, atmospheric rivers are relatively rare during the winter months.”</p> <p>Climate change is likely playing a role, and warming air and sea surface temperatures are likely playing a role he said.</p> <p>“As the atmosphere warms it can hold more moisture, increasing the likelihood for extreme heavy rainfall events such as this.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 China faltering economy tests leaders nerve</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/aug/20/growing-pains-chinas-faltering-economy-tests-leaderships-nerve">https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/aug/20/growing-pains-chinas-faltering-economy-tests-leaderships-nerve</a>
GIST	<p>On his tour of the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen last week, Li Keqiang, the premier, tried to send some positive energy at a time many citizens have been complaining of economic hardship.</p> <p>“China’s opening will continue. The Yellow river and the Yangtze river will not flow backward,” Li said, striking an upbeat tone while visiting Yantian Port, a gateway to Europe and North America, two of China’s biggest markets.</p> <p>“The waters of Yantian Port will also flow incessantly, and not only will continue to maintain your advantages, but also expand your advantages,” Li added. Yet last year, the traffic was far from incessant: Covid rules shut the port, delaying deliveries over Christmas. This spring, similar restrictions forced vessels to queue to enter.</p> <p>Since the start of this year, China’s insistence on a zero-Covid policy has caused much inconvenience and uncertainty for its people and the struggling economy, prompting grave concerns inside the country about what comes next.</p> <p>“The property sector is ailing, investments are all falling, and people are saving rather than spending,” says Hong Hao, a prominent market analyst whose social media account was censored this year after downbeat remarks about the economic outlook.</p> <p>Hong highlights three big headaches for Beijing policymakers: Covid, property and troubling relations with major western countries. “But there are obstacles all over the place really, and it’s hard to discern which one is the biggest.”</p> <p>These stumbling blocks will almost certainly lead to China missing its own economic growth target of “around 5.5%” this year, which Li set in March. In another worrying development, the July unemployment rate among 16- to 24-year-olds reached a record 19.9%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.</p> <p>So much so, a recent politburo meeting chaired by the president, Xi Jinping, omitted any mention of a GDP goal, instead suggesting the country should “stabilise employment and prices, maintain economic operations within a reasonable range, and strive to achieve the best possible results”.</p> <p>The worries expressed inside China are palpable, though there is also consensus that if its growth model does not reform, the economy will soon run out of the steam. But any change – for example through Beijing’s tough policies for the property sector announced in 2020 – would result in major disruption, at least in the short-to-near term. In other words, Beijing is facing a real policy dilemma.</p> <p>“The two fundamental problems for China are a natural growth slowdown and improving its regulatory environment,” says Nancy Qian, an economics professor at Northwestern University in Chicago. “Both are standard growing pains as the economy grows from a low-income to a higher-middle-income one.”</p>



Qian says China's growth is slowing and will plateau because it has reached limits set by its fundamentals. "One cannot reduce unemployment without creating new jobs. But how can there be new jobs if existing firms don't make more money? And many firms, like the real-estate firms and construction industry in trouble today, have been doing much worse than we thought."

The bad economic performance may be unavoidable, but it has real social – and potentially political – consequences. This is particularly the case for a system without the safety valve of elections.

Last month, it emerged that hundreds of homebuyers across the country were huddling together to refuse payments on mortgages on homes left unfinished by developers. On social media, angry buyers discussed ways to attract the government's attention in order to put pressure on "greedy and dishonest developers".

Sensing a social crisis in the making, Beijing quickly came up with measures to smooth out the tensions and aid the property sector – which accounts for 25% of the Chinese economy. Some local officials produced novel ideas, such as encouraging party members to lead the buying spree.

"I hope that today all comrades will take the lead in buying property," Deng Bibo, a county party secretary in Hunan province, urged in a viral video this week. "Buy one property, then buy a second one. If you purchased a second one already, then buy a third. Bought a third? Then buy your fourth."

Qian says the real-estate crisis is one example of the difficulty of maturing the regulatory system for a rapidly growing economy. Chinese watchdogs and policymakers have known for a while that huge property firms such as Evergrande were borrowing a lot. It worked as long as the economy was growing. But at some point the music stops.

Now China is stuck in a vicious circle. "The faster the slowdown, the bigger the problem," says Qian. "The less trust consumers have in the economy, the less willing they are to keep paying for incomplete housing, and the bigger the problem. The faster the slowdown, the less trust consumers have."

China's domestic trouble also has an international dimension. What was once "the world's factory" is now entangled in geopolitical battles with many western markets. Last month, Tony Danker, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, said UK companies were already rethinking their operations in anticipation of the UK's decoupling with China.

But, perhaps the biggest elephant in the room in China's economy today is politics, analysts say. In one of Li's videos during his Shenzhen tour, he was heard likening reforming and opening China to "blazing a trail of blood". But soon after it was uploaded to Chinese social media, users began to report they were no longer able to view it.

"After users' complaints and following the platform's examination, this video touched on political and current affairs content that was not qualified to publish," the error message read.

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HEADLINE	08/20 Day 178 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-178-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-178-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Vladimir Putin has agreed to inspectors visiting the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in Ukraine.</b> According to the office of the French president, Emmanuel Macron, the Russian leader had "reconsidered the demand" that the International Atomic Energy Agency travel through <a href="#">Russia</a> to the site, after Putin himself warned fighting there could bring about a "catastrophe". The office said Putin had dropped his demand that the IAEA team travel to the site via Russia, saying it could arrive via Ukraine.</li><li>• <b>The UN secretary general has asked Russia not take the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant off grid.</b> António Guterres asked on Friday that the Russian-occupied facility not be cut off from</li></ul>

	<p>Ukraine's electrical grid after Ukrainian reports that Moscow was planning to do so, saying the plant used "Ukrainian electricity".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Western officials say there are growing concerns over concerns over water cooling at the Zaporizhzhia plant.</b> Its existing reactor cooling system is critical to the safety of the site and relies on the maintenance of the electricity supply to ensure operation, but officials are anxious that Russia may disconnect the supply if it tries to cut off the plant from Ukraine's grid.</li> <li>• <b>More than half of Russia Black Sea naval aviation has been knocked out,</b> according to a western official in Ukraine. The Ukrainian raid on the Saky airbase in occupied Crimea last week knocked out "more than half" of Russia's combat naval aviation in the Black Sea, western officials have said. However, overall "combat stasis" remains.</li> <li>• <b>The US has announced a new \$775m (£655m) package of defence equipment and ammunition for Ukraine,</b> including various types of missiles, drones, artillery and mine-clearing systems. The US has previously sent Ukraine more than \$9bn in weapons systems, ammunition and other equipment.</li> <li>• <b>Russia's media watchdog said it was taking punitive measures against TikTok, Telegram, Zoom, Discord and Pinterest.</b> Russia has repeatedly threatened to fine sites – including Google – that violate harsh new laws criminalising the spreading of "false information" about the Russian army. On Tuesday, Russian courts fined the US-based live streaming service Twitch 2 million roubles (\$34,000) and messenger service Telegram 11 million roubles for violating military censorship laws.</li> <li>• <b>A former Russian mayor has been appointed head of Russian-occupied Kharkiv,</b> Ukraine's second-largest city. It is the latest in a string of such appointments, which Kyiv says are part of attempts to annexe its territory.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine's economy minister has said the country's economy could contract 35-40% by the end of the year.</b> Hit by Russia's 24 February invasion, the economy contracted 15.1% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2022.</li> <li>• The Kyiv Independent reported that <b>rescuers are searching for people and bodies</b> under the rubble of a dormitory destroyed in attacks on Kharkiv.</li> <li>• <b>The Chinese and Russian leaders, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin, will attend the G20 summit in Bali in November,</b> Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo, told Bloomberg News. "Xi Jinping will come. President Putin has also told me he will come," he said. As hosts of this year's summit, Indonesia has faced pressure from western countries to withdraw its invitation to Putin. The country has also invited the Ukrainian leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.</li> <li>• <b>Kharkiv has been one of the most consistently shelled cities since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine,</b> according to British intelligence. Sitting around 15km from the Russian front line, Kharkiv has suffered because it remains within range of most types of Russian artillery, the latest report from the UK's ministry of defence reads.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Yakama Nation focus nuclear waste cleanup</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/yakama-nation-nuclear-waste-cleanup">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/yakama-nation-nuclear-waste-cleanup</a>
GIST	<p>Trina Sherwood gazes out at the Hanford nuclear site as she speeds across the Columbia river in a small motorboat. More than 500 sq miles large and ringed by rocky mountains, the decommissioned nuclear production site is considered one of the most contaminated places in North America.</p> <p>It also sits on the ancestral lands of the Yakama Nation and other Indigenous peoples in Washington state. Here, precious wildlife, vision quest sites and burial grounds lie side-by-side with signs reading "warning hazardous area" and towering nuclear reactors, some of which date back to the second world war.</p> <p>There's Gable Mountain, where young men would fast and pray, explained Sherwood, a cultural specialist for the Yakama Nation's Environmental Restoration/Waste Management (ER/WM) program. There's Locke Island, where an Indigenous village once stood, and the towering White Bluffs, where Native people collected white paint for ceremonies. There are also outcroppings of tules, which were used to make mats for ceremonies and tipis, as well as yarrow root, which was known to treat burns.</p>

The Hanford nuclear site was established in 1943 as part of the Manhattan Project, and over the next four decades produced nearly two-thirds of the plutonium for the US's nuclear weapons supply, including the bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

During its lifespan, hundreds of billions of gallons of liquid waste were dumped in underground storage tanks or simply straight into the ground. After the site's nine nuclear reactors were shut down by 1987, about 56m gallons of radioactive waste were left behind in 177 large underground tanks – two of which are currently leaking – alongside a deeply scarred landscape.

In the decades since, the Yakama Nation has been one of four local Indigenous communities dedicated to the cleanup of this historic landscape. For the Yakama Nation, that has meant tireless environmental and cultural oversight, advocacy and outreach with the hope that one day the site will be restored to its natural state, opening the doors to a long-awaited, unencumbered homecoming.

Today, their outreach work has reached a fever pitch. There are few Yakama Nation elders still alive who remember the area before its transformation, and there are likely decades to go before cleanup is complete. So members are racing to pass on the site's history to the next generation, in the hopes they can one day take over.

“Our elders are leaving that have that historical knowledge; people that actually lived there during that time and can tell you stories about the area,” said Laurene Contreras, administrator for ER/WM, the program responsible for the Yakama Nation's Hanford work. “That's why it's so important for us to make sure that we're carrying that message forward.”

#### **‘Religious and moral duty’**

Yakama Nation history on the Hanford site dates back to pre-colonization, when people would spend the winter here fishing for sturgeon, salmon and lamprey in the Columbia River, as well as gathering and trading with other families. In 1855, the Nation ceded over 11m acres of land to the US, which included the Hanford area, and signed a treaty that relegated them to a reservation while allowing the right to continue fishing, hunting, and gathering roots and berries at “all usual and accustomed places”.

But in the 1940's, the situation shifted dramatically when the area was cleared out to make room for the construction of nuclear reactors.

LaRena Sohappay, 83, vice-chairwoman for Yakama Nation General Council, whose father was a well-known medicine man, grew up in Wapato, about 40 miles from Hanford. She said she remembers the strawberry fields that lined the Hanford site, her family gathering Skolkol, a root and daily food, and traveling to the area for ceremonies.

Her cousin's family who lived close to Hanford were woken in the middle of the night and forced to leave to make way for the nuclear site, she recalled

“They didn't have time to pack up anything,” said Sohappay. “They just had to leave and they were never told why and how long they were going to be gone.”

The effort to give Indigenous people a voice in Hanford's fate was forged in part by Russell Jim, a member of Yakama Nation's council, whose work has been credited with helping to keep Hanford from becoming a permanent “deep geologic repository”, a place where high-level nuclear waste from this site and others across the country would be stored.

“From time immemorial we have known a special relationship with Mother Earth,” Jim, who died in 2018, said in a statement to the US Senate in 1980. “We have a religious and moral duty to help protect Mother Earth from acts which may be a detriment to generations of all mankind.”

Today, the ER/WM program, which was founded in the early 1980's with Jim at the helm, includes such staff as a biologist, ecologist and archeologist. It's funded by the US Department of Energy (DoE), which

operates the Hanford site and leads the cleanup process under an agreement with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington state department of ecology.

The Yakama Nation program's focus is on accelerating a thorough cleanup of the site, protecting culturally significant resources and assessing the threats to wildlife and water.

The area around Hanford is considered the last free-flowing section of the Columbia River. There's a major spawning site for Chinook salmon, and all along this section of the waterway, sturgeon live all year round, explained Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation acting Tribal Administrative Director.

"Our people, we're fish people, we're salmon people in the Columbia River ... So for us, that was a priority," he said.

Chemicals including mercury, which can damage the brain, kidneys and heart, and PCBs, which can cause cancer, have been found in the river and could be ingested when eating fish, according to a 2017 advisory. For the Hanford Reach, a 150-mile section of the river that runs through Hanford, it suggests limiting consuming some fish to four or fewer times a month.

In the past decade, it was also discovered that hundreds of gallons of highly radioactive waste have been leaking from two Hanford tanks, threatening the Columbia River.

McClure Tosch, a Natural Resource Injury Assessment lead for ER/WM, said recently Yakama Nation has played a key role in developing a plan for the EPA to monitor the basin, including fish tissue.

ER/WM has also been advocating for the federal government to test the wells at Hanford near the Columbia River for PFAS, long-lasting chemicals that can be found in an array of commercial and industrial products. If found, Tosch said, that could be a huge concern for the local drinking water. The energy department said in a statement: "Information-gathering about the occurrence and use of PFAS at DoE sites is ongoing".

There has also been a focus by the Yakama Nation to preserve culturally significant plants. Most recently, Sherwood has been overseeing the protection of a bright yellow plant known as Umtanum desert buckwheat. It has long been known as a medicinal plant for the local Indigenous people, and today, Hanford is the only place in the world where it is documented as growing.

#### **A 'push and pull' effect**

Despite the sometimes glacial nature of the federal government's work, the Yakama Nation have scored some important wins.

Recently, the ER/WM succeeded in amending a cleanup proposal for an area next to the Columbia River containing nuclear reactors, ensuring it will include a review of the impact on local aquatic insects. And in the coming months, Tosch says the tribe will work with the federal government to assess the effectiveness of a polyphosphate injection to sequester uranium found in Hanford's groundwater; an approach the tribe has questioned.

ER/WM staff have also pushed back against a federal government change in how high-level radioactive waste is classified, which could downgrade some of Hanford's waste, ultimately preventing it from being removed from the site as expected. The energy department said they don't plan to move forward with this new interpretation without first meeting with local Indigenous Nations.

For their part, both DoE and EPA said their representatives meet with Yakama Nation regularly about Hanford and have benefitted from their's and other local Indigenous Nations' expertise and input.

But Brian Stickney, DoE's deputy manager for the Hanford Site, said in a statement that while Yakama Nation wants to see the lands returned to a pre-nuclear state, DoE is focused on regulatory requirements and protecting treaty rights.

The Washington state department of ecology, which helps to oversee the Hanford cleanup and whose officials meet with the Yakama Nation at least once a month, described their relationship with the tribal Nation as a bit “push and pull”.

“We are the regulators, and sometimes Yakama Nation would like us to push a little harder than they perceive us doing,” said Laura Watson, its director. “And so there’s a little bit of that push and pull. And that’s fine, that’s actually important as a regulator to have folks pushing.”

#### **‘For our children not yet born’**

A fully rehabilitated Hanford site likely won’t happen within the lifetime of Yakama Nation’s elders, or even the generation that follows. So, they’re working diligently to bring in younger tribal members to the effort.

In recent years, they’ve held coloring contests, a mass postcard mailing campaign and visited local schools, explained Samantha Redheart, who coordinates Stem programs for ER/WM. They’ve also offered college scholarships for students studying such subjects as engineering and science in the hopes that the recipients may one day bring that knowledge back to the community.

“We always share that Hanford is a multi-generational cleanup site,” she said. “Yakama Nation leaders and management are always looking into not just the cleanup today, but for our future generations and of our children that are not yet born.”

22 high school students were allowed to visit Hanford in 2016 - a rare opportunity, explains Redheart, as those under 16 are typically not allowed on most of the site. She said they took them to a series of culturally important sites, pointing out traditional cultural artifacts and salmon spawning grounds. But the experience was thoroughly regimented, involving energy department staff, hazmat guides and strict timelines.

If Sohappy had her way, sharing her knowledge of Hanford before it was a nuclear site with the next generation would involve something of a trip back in time. She would take them on wagons and horses to each of the important sites, making sure to point out where the strawberry fields and old town once stood.

It’s difficult to know whether that will ever be a reality. She herself hasn’t been to Hanford in over a decade.

“It angers me that I can’t go where my dad used to wander around,” she says. “There’s nothing there that’s pleasurable. Not anymore anyway. It’s all torn up.”

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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Broadens: Russia shelling, Ukraine airstrike</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/20/russian-shelling-ukrainian-airstrike-reflect-broad/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/20/russian-shelling-ukrainian-airstrike-reflect-broad/</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces stepped up their battle to seize one of the dwindling number of cities in embattled eastern Ukraine not already under their control while continuing to fire on towns and villages in the country’s north and south, Ukrainian officials said Saturday.</p> <p>Russian shelling collapsed balconies and blew out windows in the southern region of Mykolayiv, injuring at least nine civilians, authorities said. A five-story apartment building and private homes in the town of Voznesensk were badly damaged, the Black Sea region’s governor said.</p> <p>“As of 13.30 p.m. (local time) - nine wounded, including four children. All children in a serious condition. Ages range from 3 to 17 years,” Gov. Vitaliy Kim wrote in a Telegram post. He added that a young girl lost an eye as a result of Saturday’s attack.</p>

Reflecting the broadening frontlines of the nearly 6-month war in Ukraine, a Ukrainian airstrike hit targets in the largest Russian-occupied city in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, according to Ukrainian and Kremlin-backed local officials.

The Ukrainian mayor of Melitopol said preliminary reports pointed to “a precise hit” on a Russian military base. The head of the Kremlin-backed administration said the attack damaged residential areas and slightly injured one civilian.

In its daily update, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said intensified combat took place around Bakhmut, a small city whose capture would enable Russia to threaten the two largest remaining Ukrainian-held urban centers in the eastern Donbas region.

Bakhmut has for weeks been a key target of Moscow’s eastern offensive as the Russian military tries to complete a months-long campaign to conquer all of the Donbas, an industrial region that borders Russia where pro-Moscow separatists have self-proclaimed a pair of independent republics.

A local Ukrainian official reported sustained fighting Saturday morning near four settlements on the border between Luhansk and Donetsk provinces, which together make up the contested region.

Luhansk Gov. Serhii Haidai did not name the settlements or mention Bakhmut, which lies around 25 kilometers (16 miles) from the border between the two provinces. Russian forces overran nearly all of Luhansk last month and since then have focused on capturing Ukrainian-held areas of Donetsk.

Russian shelling killed seven civilians Friday in Donetsk province, including four in Bakhmut, Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko wrote Saturday on Telegram. Taking Bakhmut would give the Russians room to advance on the province’s main Ukrainian-held cities, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.

The General Staff update said Sloviansk and Kramatorsk also were targeted Friday along with the Kharkiv region to the north, home to Ukraine’s second-largest city.

Neither Moscow nor Kyiv commented on the airstrike aimed at Russian-occupied Melitopol in southern Ukraine. Earlier Saturday morning, The Russian Defense Ministry’s spokesman, Igor Konashenkov, claimed that pro-Russia forces had shot down Ukrainian shells near the city, as well as near a key power station in the Kherson region, which the Russians seized early in the war.

The head of the Kremlin-installed administration in Melitopol confirmed Saturday that the city had come under Ukrainian fire.

“During the night, the Kyiv regime launched two attacks on our beautiful Melitopol, on residential areas of the city. Russian air defense systems shot down missiles, but as a result of the shelling, the houses of residents on (two) streets were partially destroyed and damaged,” Galina Danilchenko said on Telegram.

The Ukrainian mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Ferodov, said local Ukrainian authorities were gathering information on the strike.

“Tonight, there were powerful explosions in Melitopol, which the whole city heard,” Ferodov said. “According to preliminary data, (it was) a precise hit on one of the Russian military bases, which the Russian fascists are trying to restore for the umpteenth time in the airfield area,”

Shortly after Dalnichenko’s post, Ferodov reported that residential areas in the city were hit but he blamed that strike that destroyed about 10 homes on the Moscow-backed forces stationed in Melitopol. He also reiterated his earlier claim that a Ukrainian airstrike badly damaged a Russian military base.

The Ukrainian governor of the southern Zaporizhzhia region, which is partly controlled by Russia and where Melitopol is located, said late Friday evening that a child was seriously injured by Russian shelling on the outskirts of the regional capital that day.

	<p>The governor, Oleksandr Starukh, said on Telegram that the 8-year-old girl remained on a ventilator following surgery, but was in “stable” condition. Starch added that the same attack in the city of Zaporizhzhia left two adult civilians with “injuries of moderate severity.”</p> <p>Ukrainian officials have indicated plans for a counter-offensive to win back occupied areas in the country’s south while Russia had most of its focus on the east.</p> <p>Local authorities reported renewed Russian shelling overnight along a broad front, including of the northern Kharkiv and Sumy regions, which border Russia, as well as of the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region and Mykolayiv.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Iran operatives spying on US think-tank</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/19/iran-operatives-reportedly-spying-members-think-ta/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/19/iran-operatives-reportedly-spying-members-think-ta/</a>
GIST	<p>Iranian operatives have targeted members of a U.S.-based think tank through surveillance and cyber operations, signaling Tehran’s broad intent to abduct or assassinate Americans on U.S. soil, according to reports.</p> <p>Several members of the New York-based advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI) have been the subject of suspected Iranian surveillance operations carried out on U.S. soil as well as various phasing operations believed to be carried out by a cyber warfare group linked to the Islamic Republic.</p> <p>Those being targeted include UANI CEO and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under the George W. Bush administration Mark Wallace, the group’s original funder Thomas Kaplan, and former Democratic Sen. Joe Lieberman from Connecticut who currently serves as the chairman for UANI, according to a report by The Dispatch.</p> <p>Members affiliated with the think tank have been photographed by unknown individuals in at least three instances, the outlet reported. The FBI has sent Mr. Kaplan “duty to warn” notices alerting him that he may be the target of a hostile foreign power.</p> <p>Mr. Kaplan told the news site that while the threat from Iranian operatives “existed from the very beginning,” he said it has grown “more and more pervasive.”</p> <p>“I’d been sort of given signals that the Iranians were watching, and that didn’t inhibit me,” he said. “And it still doesn’t inhibit me despite the fact that the threat level is now at an official level. To the contrary, it just reinforces my opposition to this particular regime.”</p> <p>Operatives, which UANI believes are linked to the Iranian-linked cyber warfare group Charming Kitten, have also targeted its members in phishing operations meant to impersonate UANI leadership and disseminate suspicious RSVP links for fake events.</p> <p>Mr. Wallace said the threats posed to Americans by Iran are “multiple, pervasive, and systematic.”</p> <p>“I’m not aware of any time in our history that a hostile foreign government is systematically and pervasively targeting attacks on American soil against Americans,” he said. “This is a state actor pursuing these activities against Americans. That sure looks to me like an act of war.”</p> <p>The Justice Department also recently revealed that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps plotted to kill former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former White House National Security Adviser John Bolton, who is also a senior adviser to UANI.</p> <p>The Justice Department announced charges against an IRGC operative accused of offering to pay contacts inside the U.S. up to \$300,000 to kill the former national security adviser.</p>



In January, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi marked the second anniversary of the 2020 strike that killed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Quds Force Commander Qassim Soleimani by declaring that former President Donald Trump and Mr. Pompeo “will be charged for committing this heinous crime and will face the consequence of their criminal actions.”

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Congress in April that the threat of an Iranian attack on Mr. Pompeo is “real and ongoing.”

Mr. Bolton is among those staunchly opposed to President Biden’s attempts at restoring the Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran, which Mr. Trump withdrew from in 2018. He said the plot adds to the body of evidence that Tehran cannot be trusted.

“This entire campaign constitutes an act of war against the United States,” Mr. Bolton said Wednesday of Iran’s plot to kill him. “At the same time, [the Biden administration is] trying to believe that they’re not going to pursue nuclear weapons, which they’ve been doing for over 20 years with a clear military objective.”

Iran also is suspected of involvement in the recent knife attack on author Salman Rushdie at a speaking engagement in New York.

The India-born British author has lived under threat after the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa in response to Mr. Rushdie’s 1988 novel “The Satanic Verses.”

Iran has denied any links to the attack.

Iran’s Kayhan newspaper, whose editor is personally chosen by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, declared in a front-page editorial published Sunday that “God has taken his revenge on Rushdie” and that “it is now the turn of Trump and Pompeo.”

Mr. Rushdie’s alleged assailant — Hadi Matar, a 24-year-old American born to Lebanese parents — was quickly detained and charged with attempted murder.

Mr. Matar’s mother told The Daily Mail that he became radicalized after visiting Lebanon in 2018.

Iran has attempted to target other citizens in the U.S. who have been deemed as enemies of the regime.

The Justice Department last year charged four Iranian intelligence officials with conspiring to abduct New York-based Iranian women’s rights activist Masih Alinejad.

Earlier this month, a man carrying a loaded AK-47 showed up at Ms. Alinejad’s home in Brooklyn in an apparent murder plot.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Europe divided on banning Russia tourists</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/world/europe/europe-russia-tourists-visas-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/world/europe/europe-russia-tourists-visas-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS — A proposal that the European Union ban visas for all Russian tourists because of the Ukraine invasion has set off a debate in the continent’s capitals about morality, legality, collective guilt and the use of power.</p> <p>Already, some nations, like Estonia, are implementing their own bans, canceling some visas and refusing to allow Russian tourists to enter. Other countries, like Germany, argue a blanket ban will hurt Russians opposed to President Vladimir V. Putin and his war. Still others say the European Union cannot afford to show divisions over the issue and needs to come up with a consensus policy.</p>

Further fueling the debate, the Czech government, which holds the current presidency of the European Union, will raise the proposal with foreign ministers at the end of this month.

Beyond the legal and moral issues raised by the proposed ban, suggested this month by President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, lies a more practical question: Would it have the intended effect, as its proponents say, of driving home to the Russian people the costs of the war begun by their autocratic president, Vladimir V. Putin? Or would it, as critics say, produce the opposite result by antagonizing and alienating Russians, while reinforcing Mr. Putin's claims that the West is trying to destroy Russia?

Benjamin Tallis, a Berlin-based analyst, argued that bans would not just stop Russians from taking European vacations while their troops kill Ukrainians, but would also provide a chance for Europeans to use their power for moral and strategic ends.

"A ban is a really strong show of resolve," he said. "The European Union is very conscious of its openness and transformative power, and shutting that down is a powerful sign."

It would tell Russians, "travel to Europe is a privilege, and you value it, and we're going to take it away," he said. "Power begets power, and in general the E.U. and some states, especially Germany, are very shy about using the real power they do have."

Lithuania's foreign minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis, has argued that if the Russians who oppose the war were compelled to stay home, they could help bring about change. Yet polls indicate the war is popular among most Russians, who generally get their news from state media.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany criticized the proposal on Monday, saying "this is Putin's war" and "not the Russian people's." It was "important to us to understand that there are a lot of people fleeing from Russia because they are disagreeing with the Russian regime," he said.

In Russia, too, there has been considerable reaction, with many dissidents opposing a blanket ban.

A ban could face legal challenges. Sarah Ganty, a visiting professor at the Central European University in Vienna, argued that comprehensive ban would be illegal under E.U. law. And Gérard Araud, a former French ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, asserted that "collective punishment is contrary to international law" and that a ban "has no realistic, achievable goal."

He added: "It is contrary to European values to randomly punish innocent individuals — it is not because the other side doesn't respect any values that we should forget ours."

Some proponents of a ban contend the European Union has largely run out of new sanctions to impose on Russia and Mr. Putin's circle. Restrictions on technology and banking, done in concert with Washington, have hurt Russia's economy badly, and the West is isolating Russia diplomatically.

But critics say the European Union should first enforce existing sanctions. The most important, on the importation of all Russian energy sources except coal, contain many exceptions, have been delayed or have not yet come into force, providing billions in funds to the Kremlin.

After Mr. Zelensky raised the visa ban idea, it was taken up by leaders of countries close to Russia, which with the exception of Finland were occupied by Moscow after World War II.

Most prominent among them are Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Poland, which share land borders with Russia. They have had to handle a relatively large influx of Russian tourists wanting to enter Europe, because Brussels banned all flights between Russia and the European Union. Once they enter the European Union, those tourists can fly elsewhere inside Europe's free travel zone, called the Schengen area.

The proposal has caught the attention of the estimated 15 percent of Russians who travel abroad, many of whom also tend to oppose Mr. Putin. Tens of thousands of people have fled Russia since the invasion, knowing that to criticize the war could bring years in prison and heavy fines.

Banning Russian tourists would do nothing to weaken Mr. Putin, argued Viktor A. Shenderovich, a satirist who left Russia this year.

“Putin is out of reach, but you can reach a teacher, a doctor, Putin’s hostages, people who have been Putin’s hostages for quite a while, and make their lives even harder,” he said.

He was among the prominent figures on the Russian Anti-War Committee who asserted a ban would “clearly play to the Kremlin’s advantage.”

Russian state media has responded with mockery. On the “60 Minutes” show on Monday, the presenter Olga Skabeyeva said Europe had switched from trying to isolate Russia to isolating all Russians. Ban supporters, she said, “stabbed in the back the Russian fifth column and said that visas for Europe should not be issued even to the Russian opposition.”

On social media, some Russians said a ban would be immoral, and some suggested Europeans were being hypocritical, more willing to stop people than the gas that funds the war.

“You can remain useful for your country while being in another place,” Ivan Pavlov, a human rights lawyer who also left Russia, wrote on Facebook. “Thanks to the internet, Russians abroad have even more opportunities in this regard than those who remain.”

But Toomas Hendrik Ilves, the former president of Estonia, told the BBC a visa ban would be “one of the most humane kinds of sanctions, because it doesn’t affect poor Russians and affects the middle class and the rich ones.”

Radoslaw Sikorski, a former Polish foreign minister and now a European lawmaker, argued any restrictions should be agreed upon by Schengen-area members, “because the decisions of any one country affect everybody else.”

But Mr. Sikorski believes a ban is misguided. “The objective should be not only for Ukraine to defend itself, but for Russia to be transformed,” he said, noting the experience of Poles who, through travel, could compare life under communism to that in the West.

There are other options, he said, such as more stringent vetting procedures for Russians who apply for visas, and perhaps even requiring applicants to state they do not contribute to the war.

In fact, Estonia had already canceled many Schengen visas granted to Russians, and stopped issuing most new ones. But under Schengen rules, it cannot prevent Russians with visas granted in other Schengen countries from entering Estonia by land.

Latvia and Finland recently tightened their restrictions, with Finland cutting the visas it issues to Russians by 90 percent, to only 100 a day. Lithuania and the Czech Republic have paused issuing visas to most Russians.

For Mr. Zelensky, the matter is clear: Russians, he said, “should live in their own world until they change their philosophy.” Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, put the country’s position in blunt terms. Russians, he said this month, “must be deprived of the right to cross international borders until they learn to respect them.”

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HEADLINE	08/19 Ukraine strikes slow Russia advance?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/world/europe/ukraine-russia-crimea.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/world/europe/ukraine-russia-crimea.html</a>

KYIV, Ukraine — The Ukrainian military extended the fight deeper into Russian-controlled territory on Friday, as it sharpens a strategy of trying to degrade Moscow's combat capabilities by striking ammunition depots and supply lines in the occupied Crimean Peninsula and other areas the Kremlin had long thought to be safe.

Crimea, a key staging ground for Russia's invasion, has been firmly under Kremlin control since it was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014. But it has been rocked by several recent attacks, some carried out by clandestine Ukrainian fighters operating behind enemy lines. Oleksiy Danilov, the head of Ukraine's national security council, said on Friday that Kyiv would target sites in Crimea as part of a "step-by-step demilitarization of the peninsula with its subsequent de-occupation."

Overnight into Friday, blasts hit at a military airfield outside Sevastopol, the largest city in Crimea and home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet; the Russians later said the booms were the sound of successful anti-aircraft fire. Loud bangs were also reported above the Kerch Strait bridge, the only land link connecting Russia to Crimea. There appeared to be no damage to the bridge, and Russia said that those explosions, too, were the result of anti-aircraft fire.

A large fire also broke out in an ammunition depot in Russia itself, in the border region of Belgorod, forcing the evacuation of two villages, according to the region's governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov.

The blasts came less than two weeks after a Ukrainian [strike on a Russian air base](#) in Crimea destroyed eight fighter jets. And this week, [huge explosions hit a Russian ammunition depot](#) in Crimea, which a senior Ukrainian official attributed to an elite Ukrainian military unit.

Russian officials acknowledged explosions at the sites and said they were investigating the causes.

It remains unclear whether Ukraine's recent activity in Russian-held territory is just an isolated flurry or, as Ukrainian officials have said, the first stages of a sustained effort to diminish Russia's military capability.

Nor is it clear that even a successful campaign of sabotage could overcome the Russian military's overwhelming advantage in numbers and weaponry. Russia suffered a humiliating defeat in northern Ukraine in the war's early days, but was able to regroup and launch a drive in the east that rumbled through Luhansk Province and is still inching forward.

Paula J. Dobriansky, a former American diplomat specializing in national security affairs, said that by threatening Russian supply lines and underscoring Moscow's tenuous grip on Crimea, the strikes in Crimea were "both operational and symbolic."

The strikes may also represent a deliberate strategy not only to disrupt Russian logistics and supply lines but to put the war back on the Russian domestic political agenda, said Christopher Miller, an associate professor of international history at the Fletcher School at Tufts University.

"The Russian view has been that Crimea is a closed issue, and while the reality is that Russia has had uncontested de facto control, now that is no longer the case," he said. "Certainly, Ukraine isn't threatening any immediate retaking of Crimea," he added, but Ukraine has shown the area is vulnerable to attack.

The blasts came amid escalating tensions around the sprawling Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southeastern Ukraine, Europe's largest, where Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of planning an attack that could lead to a nuclear disaster.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, in his first public remarks about the battles that have raged around the nuclear complex, accused the Ukrainian military on Friday of risking a "large-scale catastrophe" by shelling the plant.

The remarks, paraphrased by the Kremlin presidential website, came during a telephone call initiated by President Emmanuel Macron of France.

The two presidents agreed to work toward organizing a visit by a delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the Kremlin said. Ukraine has said, too, that it would welcome an I.A.E.A. delegation. The I.A.E.A. said on Friday that it was "in active consultations with all parties" to send inspectors "as soon as possible." But it remains unclear how a visit would be organized amid the heavy fighting in the region.

Ukraine on Friday raised fresh concerns about another safety issue at the Zaporizhzhia plant, warning that Russia was preparing to disconnect the plant's power lines from Ukraine's grid. The potentially risky and complicated process could deprive government-controlled territories of power and divert it to Crimea and Russia.

The Russians would have to shut off reactors at the plant to reroute the electricity. That means that power to keep cooling systems functioning at the plant would come from diesel generators, raising the risks of an accident at a facility where workers have been operating under duress.

During a visit to the Ukrainian city of Odesa on Friday, António Guterres, the United Nations secretary general, said that a recent agreement that allowed shipments of grain to flow from the Black Sea port stood as a symbol of what the world can achieve when countries work together for the common good.

But Mr. Guterres also expressed concern about Russia possibly preparing to disconnect power lines at the Zaporizhzhia plant.

"Obviously, the electricity from Zaporizhzhia is Ukrainian electricity, and it's necessary, especially during the winter for the Ukrainian people, and this principle must be fully respected," he said. Mr. Guterres has called for a demilitarized zone around the plant — an idea Russia has rejected.

Ukrainian claims about Russia's intentions could not be independently verified, and Moscow had no immediate comment.

As the war nears the six-month mark, the Pentagon on Friday announced a new shipment of up to \$775 million in arms and equipment to help Ukraine mount a counteroffensive against Russian troops in the south.

The latest shipment includes 40 armored vehicles equipped with giant rollers to clear minefields ahead of any Ukraine ground operation, as well as 50 armored troop-carrying Humvees, 1,500 TOW missiles and 1,000 Javelin antitank missiles.

"The mine-clearing is a really good example of how the Ukrainians will need this sort of capability to be able to push their forces forward and retake territory," a senior Defense Department official told reporters.

The package also includes 16 105-millimeter howitzers and 36,000 rounds of ammunition, as well as 15 ScanEagle drones to help spot Russian targets. The Defense Department will also continue to send rockets for the [HIMARS launchers](#) that have been credited with destroying Russian command posts and ammunition depots.

For now, the United States has limited to 16 the number of HIMARS launchers sent to Ukraine, fearing that providing more could deplete the Pentagon's stockpile of satellite-guided rockets and eventually endanger U.S. combat readiness.

A senior Pentagon official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss operational matters, declined to comment on the attacks and other explosions in Crimea over the past two weeks. But the official seemed to confirm the effectiveness of Ukraine's recent efforts to hobble the Russian military effort.

	<p>“Right now, I would say that you are seeing a complete and total lack of progress by the Russians on the battlefield,” the official said. “You’re seeing this hollowing out of the Russian forces in Ukraine.”</p> <p>Pressed by reporters, the official acknowledged that the Ukrainians have not made much progress either, lacking sufficient troops and combat power to drive the Russians from their defensive positions.</p> <p>“We haven’t seen a significant retake of territory,” the official said, “but we do see a significant weakening of Russian positions in a variety of locations.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/19 US new Ukraine shipment \$775M weapons</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#the-pentagons-latest-package-includes-up-to-775-million-of-weapons-and-supplies-from-its-stockpile">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#the-pentagons-latest-package-includes-up-to-775-million-of-weapons-and-supplies-from-its-stockpile</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>WASHINGTON — The United States is sending a new influx of arms and equipment that Ukraine will need for its counteroffensive against Russian troops in the country’s south, the Pentagon said on Friday.</p> <p>The Defense Department will also continue to send a steady stream of rockets for the HIMARS launchers that have been credited with destroying Russian command posts and ammunition depots, and other artillery designed to disrupt supply lines.</p> <p>Taken together, the new shipment of up to \$775 million of weapons and supplies from the Pentagon’s stockpiles illustrates an emerging dual strategy: fueling Ukraine’s immediate artillery fight, while also helping to build up an arsenal to support a counterattack near Kherson, in the country’s south, that has yet to fully materialize.</p> <p>The latest shipment includes 40 armored vehicles equipped with giant rollers to clear minefields ahead of any Ukraine ground operation, as well as 50 armored troop-carrying Humvees, 1,500 TOW guided missiles and 1,000 Javelin anti-tank missiles.</p> <p>“The mine-clearing is a really good example of how the Ukrainians will need this sort of capability to be able to push their forces forward and retake territory,” a senior Defense Department official told reporters on a conference call on Friday.</p> <p>The Pentagon is also sending more high-speed anti-radiation missiles, or HARMs — air-to-ground weapons designed to seek and destroy Russian air defense radar. Military technicians have figured out how to integrate the American missile on Ukraine’s Soviet-designed MiG fighter jets to help defeat one of the biggest threats to the Ukrainian air force.</p> <p>The package also includes the HIMARS rockets, 16 105-millimeter howitzers and 36,000 rounds of ammunition, as well as 15 ScanEagle drones to help spot Russian targets and relay location information to the gunners.</p> <p>For now, the United States has limited to 16 the number of HIMARS launchers sent to Ukraine, fearing that providing more would lead to burning through the Pentagon’s stockpile of satellite-guided rockets and eventually endanger U.S. combat readiness.</p> <p>Pentagon officials have emphasized in recent days that its resupply of ammunition for various artillery systems has now reached a regular, sustainable level that Ukrainian commanders can count on as they plan operations.</p> <p>The shipment, the Biden administration’s 19th overall to Ukraine, comes as fighting in Kherson, in the south, and the Donbas region, in the east, has largely ground to a standstill. A Russian offensive to seize Donetsk Province, part of the Donbas, has stalled — partly, American officials said, because Moscow rushed several thousand troops to the south to counter the anticipated Ukrainian offensive there and partly because of the effects of the HIMARS strikes.</p>



	<p>“Right now, I would say that you are seeing a complete and total lack of progress by the Russians on the battlefield,” the senior Pentagon official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss operational matters. “You’re seeing this hollowing out of the Russian forces in Ukraine.”</p> <p>But when pressed by reporters, the official said that the Ukrainians lacked sufficient troops and combat power to drive the Russians from their defensive positions.</p> <p>“We haven’t seen a significant retake of territory, but we do see a significant weakening of Russian positions in a variety of locations,” the official said.</p> <p>The official repeatedly declined to comment on a series of attacks and other explosions in Crimea over the past two weeks. Ukrainian officials privately attribute the attacks to an elite Ukrainian special forces unit operating behind enemy lines with the help of local partisan fighters. The strikes have shocked Russian commanders in Crimea, who thought their forces and weapons depots were out of reach of Ukrainian attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Another halt to Germany’s gas flow</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#gazprom-germany-gas">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#gazprom-germany-gas</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN — Gazprom, the Kremlin-controlled energy giant, says it will temporarily shut down its gas pipeline to Germany at the end of the month for repairs, a move likely to trigger more uncertainty in Europe as countries struggle to compensate for cuts in Russian fossil fuels.</p> <p>Gazprom says it will close the taps of the Nord Stream pipeline from Aug. 31 to Sept. 2 to replace a turbine with the help of its manufacturer, Siemens. Gazprom and the German government have already been trading blame for slowed flows of gas through the pipeline. Gazprom has said Western sanctions have slowed repairs, reducing gas flows by up to 60 percent. Berlin has accused Gazprom of playing politics on Moscow’s behalf.</p> <p>“The Russian side’s justification is simply a pretext,” Robert Habeck, Germany’s economy minister, told reporters in Berlin in June. “It is obviously the strategy to unsettle and drive up prices.”</p> <p>Europe has been working to wean itself off Russian gas, oil and coal as part of its sanctions on Moscow in retaliation for the invasion of Ukraine. Many European states are bracing for potential energy shortages this winter, but perhaps none are as vulnerable as Germany, Europe’s largest economy. More than half of Germany’s gas imports came from Russia before the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Germany has been working to find alternative sources of natural gas, and has also made the awkward decision to restart coal plants already shut down as part of its plan to phase out coal by 2030. It now looks likely to extend the life of its contested three nuclear plants as well.</p> <p>According to Gazprom, gas transports through the underwater pipeline to Germany could be resumed after repairs at a rate of 33 million cubic meters per day — around 20 percent of the actual capacity of the pipeline.</p> <p>The German government did not immediately comment on the announcement.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Russia replaces Black Sea fleet commander</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#russia-replaces-the-commander-of-its-damaged-black-sea-fleet">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#russia-replaces-the-commander-of-its-damaged-black-sea-fleet</a>
GIST	Russia has replaced the commander of its Black Sea Fleet, the country’s state news agency reported on Friday, following a series of setbacks that include a recent powerful strike on one of its Crimean bases and



the losses of its flagship vessel in April and control of a tiny island in June that served an outsize role in Russia's naval operations.

The shake-up suggested the gravity of the setbacks to the Black Sea Fleet's operations. While there have been unconfirmed reports of similar major changes in the leadership of other forces, they have not been made public by the Russian government.

In a report by the state news agency, Tass, on Friday, the new commander, Vice Admiral Viktor N. Sokolov, [was quoted as saying](#) that he had been appointed by the country's defense minister last week.

The comment came as he spoke to junior officers in Sevastopol, Crimea's largest port city and the base for the fleet since Russia illegally seized the peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

"The Black Sea Fleet is participating in the special military operation, and is successfully completing all the tasks set for it," Admiral Sokolov, 60, told the officers, [according to](#) Tass, using the Kremlin's terminology for the conflict.

Admiral Sokolov, who served previously as the leader of the St. Petersburg-based Kuznetsov Naval Academy, Russia's top officer training school, added that the fleet expected to receive 12 new vessels this year, along with aviation and land-based vehicles.

He replaces Vice Admiral Igor V. Osipov, who had commanded the fleet since 2019. In May, Britain's defense intelligence agency reported that [Admiral Osipov had likely been suspended](#) following the sinking of the fleet's flagship, the cruiser Moskva. Asked about the report at the time, a senior Pentagon official went further, saying the commander had been dismissed.

Pro-Kremlin military analysts have cited the Black Sea Fleet as the weakest link in Russia's military effort. Since the start of the war in February, it has suffered repeated and embarrassing setbacks. Ukraine said it used Neptune missiles to sink the Moskva in April, a strike Russia has never acknowledged. It was the biggest warship lost in combat in decades.

The Black Sea Fleet is integral to the Russian war effort and has been crucial in Moscow's efforts to exert control along Ukraine's coastline, devastating Ukraine's economy. The fleet has also launched sea-based long-distance missiles to strike targets deep inside Ukraine.

"Most of Russia's naval victories have been achieved here by the Black Sea Fleet," Admiral Sokolov told the officers, according to [a video](#) report of the event by the local television network.

The change in leadership came as Ukraine has increasingly used sabotage and sophisticated longer-range weapons to strike Russian-held territory. But Russia has shown a robust ability to absorb losses, and retains superior military might.

And it remains unclear exactly what toll the fleet sustained in the attack on its Saki air base in Crimea earlier this month, which Ukraine suggested had been carried out by special operatives and local partisans. Satellite images analyzed by The New York Times [showed at least eight destroyed jets](#).

In a briefing for reporters on Friday, a Western official said that the attack had "put more than half of Russia's Black Sea Fleet naval aviation combat jets out of use." He added that "the Russian system is busy seeking to allocate blame for the debacle."

But U.S. officials disputed the idea that such a proportion of the fleet's aviation assets had been disabled. Recent Ukrainian attacks in Crimea have been significant, they said, and the explosions and damage Ukraine has caused have been real, including the loss of some fighter jets. However, they cautioned that the damage was not decisive, and the recent attacks alone were not enough to cause a shift in the war.

	In June, Russian troops withdrew from tiny Snake Island in the Black Sea after repeated assaults by Ukrainian forces, limiting its control over Ukraine's shipping lanes.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Drone strikes HQ Russia's Black Sea fleet</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#strikes-in-recent-days-disrupt-crimeas-sense-of-security">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/20/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#strikes-in-recent-days-disrupt-crimeas-sense-of-security</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — A drone crashed into a building at the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Crimea on Saturday morning, sending plumes of smoke rising over the port city of Sevastopol, a strike that comes as Ukraine seeks to sow chaos and destruction in territory under Moscow's firm control.</p> <p>The extent of the damage was not clear in <a href="#">videos</a> released by local officials and residents. Mykhailo Razvozhaev, the local Russian proxy leader in the city, <a href="#">said no one was killed</a> in the drone strike.</p> <p>Local officials advised people to remain in their homes on Saturday morning.</p> <p>"Just like many other residents, I heard the blasts in the city center," Mr. Razvozhaev said on Friday night. He said the explosions were part of the city's air defense systems.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the strike. The Ukrainian government has not offered any public comment on specific strikes or operations, saying only that its military is engaged in a <a href="#">campaign to target Russian forces on the peninsula</a>.</p> <p>Crimea, a key staging ground for Russia's invasion, has been under Kremlin control since Moscow illegally annexed the peninsula in 2014. It has been steadily militarized since then and is home to the Black Sea Fleet.</p> <p>While the overall impact on Russia's military is far from clear, Ukraine's recent campaign of strikes behind Russian lines has disrupted the peninsula's sense of security and distance from the war. The attacks and attempted strikes in Crimea appeared to have kicked off in earnest on Aug. 9 with a strike on the Saki air base in which eight fighter jets were destroyed.</p> <p>Paula J. Dobriansky, a former American diplomat specializing in national security affairs, said that by threatening Russian supply lines and underscoring Moscow's tenuous grip on Crimea, the strikes in Crimea were "both operational and symbolic."</p> <p>The strikes may also represent a strategy to not only disrupt Russian logistics and supply lines, but also put the war back on the Russian domestic political agenda, said Christopher Miller, an associate professor of international history at Tufts University.</p> <p>In a reflection of the challenges Moscow is facing, the Russian state news media reported that the Kremlin had replaced the commander of the Black Sea Fleet after a series of setbacks, including the loss of its flagship vessel, the Moskva, in April.</p> <p>The Ukrainian southern command said on Saturday that 12 Russian vessels were "maneuvering along the Crimean coast, seeking cover," a claim that could not be independently confirmed.</p> <p>But even as Russia grapples with attacks far from the front lines, its forces continue to have the military advantage and to launch strikes across Ukraine. Russia is attacking some 700 Ukrainian frontline positions every day, according to the Ukrainian military.</p> <p>Air raid alarms blared across Ukraine, and missiles fell on the port city of Mykolaiv, a frequent target of Russian attacks, in the south. Vitaliy Kim, the head of the Mykolaiv military administration, said the missiles had been fired from the Russian S-300 long-range surface-to-air missile system. That could not be independently confirmed. There were no immediate reports of casualties.</p>

	The Ukrainians said they had shot down four Russian cruise missiles in central Ukraine near Dnipro.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 As Alaska warms, fires burn more wild land</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/us/alaska-fires-climate.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/us/alaska-fires-climate.html</a>
GIST	<p>ANDERSON, Alaska — In the wilds north of Denali, North America’s tallest mountain, the U.S. military built a radar installation near Russian airspace during the Cold War, to detect incoming ballistic missiles in the event of a nuclear strike.</p> <p>As drought dried out parts of the Alaskan wilderness this summer, the complex came under attack — not by foreign forces, but by wildfire.</p> <p>In the battle against the flames, an elite federal unit of smoke jumpers parachuted into dense spruce forests to clear a landing zone for fire crews. Nearly 600 firefighters fanned out in trucks, boats and amphibious vehicles to reach other remote areas around the Teklanika River. A helicopter crashed after taking off from a nearby airstrip, killing the seasoned pilot who was moving equipment to the front lines.</p> <p>“This place felt like a war zone,” said Don DeBlauw, 73, a retired construction worker who evacuated from his home near the installation in June when the flames reached his yard, torching hundreds of surrounding trees that were primed to burn. “Black spruce,” he said. “They call it gasoline on a stick for a reason.”</p> <p>When crews finally got the blaze under control after about a month, they had managed to save the prized radar installation, now known as Clear Space Force Station and operated by the newest branch of the U.S. military. But the lightning-sparked Clear fire, as it was named, left a charred landscape of 72,000 acres in the wilderness around Anderson, Alaska.</p> <p>A bewildering stew of factors, from spikes in intense lightning storms to a buildup of flammable grasses on thawing tundra, is driving the surge in wildfires across America’s largest state. Faced with the <a href="#">rapid warming of the Arctic</a> from climate change, people living in Alaska’s fire zones are bracing for the likelihood that this year’s blazes are merely a glimpse of even larger megafires to come.</p> <p>Six of the 10 largest wildfires in the United States this year have burned in Alaska. Several are still smoldering, raising fears over what are called “zombie fires” or “sleeping dragons” — fires that appear to go dark with the arrival of rains and snow, but actually slowly burn close to the ground through winter and erupt again in spring.</p> <p>Until rains began drenching much of the state in July, more than 550 wildland fires had torched three million acres statewide — more than the total acreage burned this year in the other 49 states combined, and nearly three times the annual average for Alaska over the last decade.</p> <p>The fires were driven in part by a severe drought in the south central region of the state, where more than half of Alaska’s population lives. For the first time in recorded history, temperatures in Anchorage went above 60 degrees every day in June, and the city received near record-low precipitation.</p> <p>Alaska isn’t alone among places in the high northern latitudes that are burning this summer. Nearly 200 fires recently <a href="#">scorched</a> northern Canada, while fires in Russia’s Far East this July created vast <a href="#">rivers of smoke</a> across parts of Siberia that were seen by NASA satellites.</p> <p>Alaska exemplifies how northern fires are growing far more destructive. Even before this year’s surge, blazes had burned more than 31.4 million acres from 2001 to 2020, more than twice the area scorched in the previous two decades, according to the International Arctic Research Center in Fairbanks.</p>

Wildfires in Alaska are exceptionally difficult to combat. The Clear fire showcased the challenge of trying to contain a blaze tearing through vast tracts of boreal forest, consisting in Alaska largely of spruce and aspens. Taken together, these northern boreal forests stretch across Canada, Alaska, Siberia and Northern Europe, forming a giant reservoir of carbon dioxide.

“The ruggedness of the terrain makes it extremely tough to do the kind of fire containment we’re used to in the Lower 48,” said Kate Airhart, who deployed from Montana to help supervise nearly 600 firefighters involved in battling the Clear fire. She cited the need for helicopters and boats, as well “fat trucks,” Canadian-made amphibious all-terrain vehicles that can float in water, to reach some areas.

Instead of containing a wildfire — by creating a perimeter to keep it from spreading, as is often the practice in the contiguous United States — crews in Alaska often opt for a “point protection” strategy that shields remote homes or critical infrastructure, but effectively allows the fire to burn across tundra and large forested areas.

For the Clear fire, that largely meant trying to protect the remote settlement of Anderson, pop. 177, and an array of off-grid homes, in addition to the radar station. Despite the effort, some civilian structures, including houses, cabins, barns and sheds, were destroyed.

“I got my horse saddled up and just rode like hell to safety,” said Charmi Weker, a retired biologist, who described the flames getting so close to her house that she could hear the crackling of embers. With her husband, horses and dogs, Ms. Weker, 70, camped for five days in a nearby gravel pit as hundreds of firefighters battled the blaze.

Mr. DeBlauw, the former construction worker, is Ms. Weker’s neighbor. He and his wife, Dorothy, paid \$50 an acre for 178 acres in the 1990s, part of a program to lure people to try farming in Alaska’s interior.

After evacuating in June, the DeBlauws returned to their homesite, where they grow hay. They found red fire retardant dropped from aircraft caking their house, garden and front yard. They lost two structures, a barn and a storage shed, but are able to live in their house.

“This kind of risk kind of comes with the territory,” Mr. DeBlauw said.

In part, that is because Alaska’s vast size and small population complicate firefighting. Facing strains on local resources and scrambling for personnel, the state deployed thousands of firefighters from the Lower 48 and Canada this summer.

Still, in a state where good roads are sparse or nonexistent, crews could not reach some fire zones. The distance between Alaska’s westernmost and easternmost fires this summer was 1,800 miles, about the same as from Denver to Boston.

And fires are burning in new conditions as the climate warms, blazing across the normally frigid tundra instead of being confined mainly to the flammable boreal forests. The East Fork fire, which burned about 450 miles west of Anchorage, spread over more than 250,000 acres and forced Yup’ik villagers to evacuate, putting it among Alaska’s most destructive tundra blazes on record.

Climate specialists say warming temperatures are thawing the tundra earlier in the year than in previous summers, allowing fires to spark and spread more widely. Flammable grasses and shrubs are also taking the place of more fire-resistant lichen and moss in the tundra ecosystem.

“There’s much more vegetation on the tundra, thanks to decades of warming,” said Rick Thoman, a climate specialist at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. “We have more biomass to burn, and that means hotter fires.”

Climate researchers are looking into other factors that are making fires more widespread, including an increase in the lightning storms that spark most blazes in the state. Alaska's interior had about 18,000 lightning strikes in just two days in early July, Mr. Thoman noted.

"We know that with a warming environment, there is more moisture available to fuel things like thunderstorms," he said, emphasizing that such storms are occurring more often in places that rarely had them.

Another challenge in many fire-ravaged landscapes in Alaska is the duff, a layer of slowly decomposing moss, lichen and tree needles on forest floors that is generally about a foot deep. Fire can smolder below the surface in the duff for weeks.

When conditions are dry, said Zav Grabinski with the Alaska Fire Science Consortium, flames can travel below the surface of the duff for several kilometers. That sets the stage for huge wildfires, he said.

If that weren't enough, Alaska also faces the problem of wildfires that appear to go dark under snowy expanses but are not actually extinguished. While thought to be relatively rare, these fires can burn deep into carbon-rich soil, smoldering through the winter and re-emerging with ferocity in the spring.

Scientists call these [overwintering blazes](#) "zombie fires," but the firefighters deployed to Anderson this summer had a different name: "sleeping dragons." They worry that even though they appeared to have stamped out the Clear fire around the missile installation, the fire could come roaring back months later.

Said Mark Goeller, who was dispatched from Oklahoma to Anderson to serve as incident commander for the Clear Fire: "You can't rule it out."

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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Migrant wave tests NYC sanctuary status</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/nyregion/nyc-migrants-texas.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/nyregion/nyc-migrants-texas.html</a>
GIST	<p>The four buses crossed into Manhattan on Wednesday morning and turned off a bustling avenue onto a shadowed side street in Midtown. The names printed on the buses — "VLP Charter," "Coastal Crew Change" — gave no hint of their mission. Only Texas license plates gave them away.</p> <p>One by one, their riders stepped out into an unfamiliar city, some tired but smiling, others just tired: men wearing backpacks, women clutching babies and blankets, children hanging onto teddy bears. One man wore no shoes, just socks.</p> <p>The city's immigrant affairs commissioner, Manuel Castro, shook everyone's hand. A man in a green T-shirt high-fived the children. Tables were laden with snacks, sanitizer, clothes, brightly colored book bags. People with clipboards proffered papers to fill out to earn a new identity: In addition to being undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers, the new arrivals would also join the ranks of homeless New Yorkers.</p> <p>The influx of migrants to the city this spring and summer, most fleeing crime and cratering economies in Central and South America, has tested New York's reputation as a world sanctuary. And it shows no sign of slowing, thanks in part to Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas, whose decision to send busload after busload to Washington and New York <a href="#">to goad Democrats on border policy</a> has helped turn the normal north-flowing river of humanity into a wave.</p> <p>New York City has long been powered to a large extent by the sweat and toil of immigrants, but its ability to help them get on their feet has been increasingly strained.</p> <p>The delivery of 129 migrants to the Port Authority Bus Terminal on Wednesday was the biggest one-day total so far in <a href="#">Mr. Abbott's campaign</a>. But it was just part of the larger migration of thousands: According to the city, the shelter system now houses 4,900 asylum seekers.</p>

They are the chief reason, the city says, that the population of the main homeless shelter system has jumped by 13 percent since May, to 51,000. There is much debate about how much of that increase is attributable to the migrants and how much to local factors like the end of an eviction moratorium and seasonal fluctuations. But whatever the reason, the situation is dire.

Shelters for families make up more than half of the city system, and in early June, their vacancy rate, which is supposed to be maintained at 3 percent, fell below 1 percent, according to the Legal Aid Society, which monitors conditions at the shelters. On Thursday, the society said, the vacancy figure was 0.18 percent, or 19 available rooms in the entire system, which holds more than 10,000 families.

The city's early response to the influx of migrants was marked by weeks of flailing and missteps, deeply at odds with the give-me-your-huddled-masses rhetoric of Mayor Eric Adams. Some families slept at an intake office in the Bronx, in violation of the law. Some were separated by bureaucratic snafus. And advocates said the city often failed to provide basics like food, diapers and medical attention.

Two weeks ago, immigrant aid groups said, Mr. Adams's team injected itself into a volunteer welcome effort at the Port Authority for a photo op, grabbing food from volunteers' hands so that the mayor could be shown distributing it himself. "People from the mayoral team were screaming at the refugees to smile at the mayor," said Ariadna Phillips, the founder of South Bronx Mutual Aid.

For much of the summer, aid groups said they were stepping in to help migrants left stranded and confused by the city.

"We know their shoe sizes, we know their medical needs, we know their court cases, where their ICE check-ins are," said Sergio Tupac Uzurin, a volunteer with NYC ICE Watch. "The city wasn't doing any of that."

But in recent days, the city government has been moving with more coordination.

The welcome centers that Mr. Adams's Office of Immigrant Affairs now sets up inside the Port Authority to meet the Abbott buses have provided desperately needed assistance to people who had been arriving in New York with no idea where to go or what to do.

The city has rented 1,300 rooms in 13 hotels for migrant families. Because it expects the flow of migrants to continue, it has put out a call for 5,000 more.

While many migrants have gotten stuck in the wheels of the city bureaucracy, some who endured dangerous and exhausting journeys to reach the United States have been relieved at the relative ease of navigating the system here.

"Imagine that we came all this way walking," said Carolina Flores, 31, who fled Venezuela with her husband and four children and has settled with them at a shelter in Brooklyn. "Everything is very good, a hotel and house for free — that is something that would never happen in our country."

By Labor Day, the city expects to open an intake center and 600-room shelter for migrant families in Midtown that would remain in operation "for the period of the next six to 12 months," according to a city proposal.

But another six to 12 months like the last month could push the jam-packed shelter system to the breaking point.

Since mid-July, the population in family shelters has risen 8.5 percent — far above the typical 1 percent growth during that midsummer period, an analysis by The New York Times found. If the trend holds for a year, the family shelter population would nearly double, to almost 60,000, up from the current 31,000.

Conditions at the border are unlikely to provide much relief: The number of apprehensions of border crossers in June [exceeded last year's record-setting June](#) by 10 percent, or 19,000 people, and migration typically accelerates in the cooler months.

The city's desire to absorb these migrants as it has earlier waves reflects the fundamental fact that New York has always relied on immigrants in every sector of the work force, from restaurants and health care to the arts, technology and finance. When New Yorkers move away, immigrants take their places, often working essential low-wage jobs that others do not want. International migration to the city [plummeted during the first year of the pandemic](#), leaving holes in the labor market that have only grown more dire as the city has tried to recover.

But the new migrants, many of whom are arriving broke and without the social connections that many immigrants use to quickly gain a foothold, are an unusual strain on the system. The need to immediately find places for thousands of them — New York is one of the few American cities that must, by law, offer shelter to anyone who asks — runs up against the [reflexive opposition to new homeless shelters](#) found in neighborhoods across the city.

Ms. Phillips of [South Bronx Mutual Aid](#) — which says it is part of a network that has put up hundreds of new migrants in temporary private sanctuaries, including many who fled shelters after being harassed or assaulted — said the sanctuaries were operating in secret lest they draw unwanted attention.

On Friday afternoon, on the streets of Bensonhurst, a Brooklyn neighborhood built by generations of immigrants, opinions about the new migrants were mixed.

Salvatore Pesaola, 52 and proudly Italian American, said he had noticed a general increase in immigrants in the neighborhood and that he would prefer they stopped arriving.

“America is not a better place — our country is as bad as yours,” he said. “Why do they come here?” Nino Juliano, 71, who emigrated from Italy in 1967 and works in construction, said of the migrants, “If they want to work, they are in the right place. If they just want help without working, they are going to suffer.”

The problem goes beyond finding places for the migrants to sleep. If their numbers continue to increase at the same pace, more than 10,000 children would join the shelter population over the next year. Most would be school age, and many, if not most, would be English-language learners. On Friday, the schools chancellor, David C. Banks, announced Project Open Arms, a plan that will provide extra help to the children of asylum seekers as they enroll in schools and receive language and learning support.

The city has not put a price tag on its effort to accommodate the migrants, but it has pleaded with the federal government for help in managing what Mr. Adams has frequently called a “humanitarian crisis.”

“We’re already dealing with a shelter system that’s overburdened,” [Mr. Adams said](#) on a talk show on Caribbean Power Jam Radio on Friday. “Until that help comes, we’re going to fulfill our obligation.”

Migrants who are apprehended by the Border Patrol are often sent back. But others are allowed to stay in the country and can apply for asylum — a process that takes years and is often unsuccessful. In the meantime, they can move freely about the country, and many are taking up the Texas governor’s offer to transport them to New York and Washington for free.

Not all migrants who reach New York enter shelters; some go to live with friends and family in the region. But a large number of the recent newcomers are Venezuelan, and, unlike previous groups of immigrants from places like Mexico, El Salvador or Ecuador, they are less likely to have already established communities to join when they arrive.

Many migrants become invisible in the vastness of the city, but there are a few places where they congregate.



In early August, about 10 of them were clustered on the steps of the Salvation Army on 14th Street in the West Village, next to a weekly pop-up soup kitchen operated by the nonprofit City Relief that also offers socks and toiletries to anyone in need.

Josiah Haken, City Relief's chief executive officer, said that the group's five New York locations were serving 1,300 guests a week, about 300 more per week than in the spring, and that new migrants were one of the main reasons, though he said he had also noted an increase in homelessness in general.

Several migrants on the Salvation Army steps carried to-whom-it-may-concern letters from their shelters that said, essentially, "help these people."

The newcomers' reviews of the shelter system have been unenthusiastic. "I don't feel good at the shelter because I'm gay," said Pedro Gutierrez, 30, who arrived from Venezuela on Aug. 4 and was assigned to a shelter on Wards Island. "Some people there are saying bad things about me, harassing me."

Dixon Arambulet, who also arrived recently from Venezuela and was staying at the same shelter, said he found it hard to sleep.

"People are always smoking and drinking and fighting," said Mr. Arambulet, 30, who worked as a barber back home. He said he slept with his head on his backpack to prevent anyone from stealing his papers.

Mainly, Mr. Arambulet said, he needed a job so he could get out of the shelter. A week later, he had not found one.

"I went out today and a boy told me he was going to talk to a man to clean a building — sweep and pick up the garbage," he wrote on Friday in a text message. "He said he would let me know."

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Portland expands ban homeless camp sites</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/portland-mayor-bans-homeless-camps-on-school-walking-routes">https://www.q13fox.com/news/portland-mayor-bans-homeless-camps-on-school-walking-routes</a>
GIST	<p><b>PORTLAND, Ore.</b> - <a href="#">Portland</a> Mayor Ted Wheeler announced Friday that the emergency declaration banning homeless camps near high-crash corridors will expand to designated safe walking routes used by school-aged children.</p> <p>The declaration bans camping along "priority routes to and from schools" and within 150 feet of school buildings, KOIN-TV reported. <a href="#">Clearing homeless encampments</a> will also be prioritized in areas around schools.</p> <p>Wheeler noted children, specifically those in elementary and middle school, are a vulnerable group that could be harmed by trash and biohazards frequently found in areas where people lacking permanent shelter are living, often in tents.</p> <p>"School-age children should be able to walk, bike, and ride buses to get to and from schools without potentially dangerous hazards as a result of encampments, including trash, tents in the right-of-way, biohazards, hypodermic needles, and more," Wheeler said.</p> <p>Primary Investment Routes, which were established through Portland's Safe Routes to School Program, will no longer allow camping under this declaration. These routes were identified as part of a program funded by a 10-cent gas tax and Heavy Vehicle Use Tax voters passed in 2016.</p> <p>The mayor's office says their impact reduction program and other city bureaus will notify people living along those routes of the change and help them access shelter services.</p>

	<p>In February, Wheeler signed an emergency ban on homeless camps near roads with high numbers of vehicle crashes. That declaration was prompted by a report the Portland Bureau of Transportation released that said in 2021 the city saw its highest number of traffic deaths since 1990.</p> <p>Advocates for the homeless and some people living on the streets have expressed dismay and alarm with the mayor's position, which they say often criminalizes the city's most vulnerable residents and can further traumatize many of them, The Oregonian/OregonLive <a href="#">reported</a>. Others say the problem is being treated as a blight or a chance for cheap political gains, instead of a humanitarian crisis.</p> <p>Donald H. Whitehead Jr., executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, earlier this year said <a href="#">at least 65 U.S. cities were criminalizing or sweeping encampments</a>.</p> <p>In Seattle, Mayor Bruce Harrell ran on a platform that called for action to address people living in tent encampments on the streets and has removed highly visible camps in his first few months in office. In May, Harrell announced his <a href="#">homeless action plan</a> and an encampment database to track progress amid the years long homeless crisis.</p> <p>Emergency declarations made by Portland's mayor last for two weeks but can be reinstated indefinitely.</p> <p>Routes that will be impacted by the Portland emergency declaration can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Top 5 market: Spokane housing price drops</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/money/economy/boomtown-inland-northwest/speculation-real-estate-correction-spokanes-housing-market/293-40a772f8-fd22-4f8e-900f-61733a0d0dfb">https://www.krem.com/article/money/economy/boomtown-inland-northwest/speculation-real-estate-correction-spokanes-housing-market/293-40a772f8-fd22-4f8e-900f-61733a0d0dfb</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash — The last two years have been a whirlwind for Spokane's real estate market. But now there's speculation of a real estate correction for the Lilac City.</p> <p>The Lilac City's real estate market has been going full-steam ahead during the course of the pandemic and was characterized by both a huge demand &amp; sky-rocketing housing prices.</p> <p>Kristi Morris, a broker with Windermere Manito, described the past two years as being “hot, hot, hot,” while Melissa Murphy, owner of Prime Real Estate Group, remembered it being “a crazy, crazy time.”</p> <p>Murphy remembered some homes getting up to 15 to 20 offers during that time: “People were scrambling to get their foot in any door. We had lines of traffic out for showings as people were cramming to get in in short timelines and get offers submitted.”</p> <p>Some of the reasons behind the market drive were low interest rates and low inventory.</p> <p>But now there's a shift starting to be felt.</p> <p>According to <a href="#">Moody's Analytics, as reported by Fortune Magazine</a>, they're forecasting Spokane to be in the top five markets for housing price drops, with a forecasted drop of 5.22% for 2023 and a 4.11% drop for 2024.</p> <p>The recent spike in mortgage interest rates is expected to be a part of the equation for the shift. But Morris added fatigue could also be an issue.</p> <p>"I think people are just tired of having to fight so hard for a house that they want," she said.</p> <p>As to whether the forecast from Moody's comes true, both Murphy and Morris said it's hard to say since there's no crystal ball to help figure out the future.</p> <p>However, both do think the Spokane housing market is becoming more stable.</p>

	<p>"It's still a seller's market," said Morris, "But you can kind of feel the needle just kind of edging its way toward more of a balance market."</p> <p>Murphy said, "What we had was so abnormal and so crazy. I've heard it as this way: It's kind of like a party. You can't party all night long, right? Morning has to come. You have to go back to a normal state. It can't be that crazy for that long."</p> <p>Other cities listed in the top five markets for housing price drops in 2023 include Reno, Nev. and Honolulu, Hawaii.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Kittitas Co. hikers in medical emergencies</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/hot-conditions-produce-backcountry-medical-emergencies">https://komonews.com/news/local/hot-conditions-produce-backcountry-medical-emergencies</a>
GIST	<p>KITTITAS COUNTY, Wash. — Kittitas County officials have responded to three medical emergencies from back country hikers in the last two days, all of which are concerning heat exhaustion and dehydration.</p> <p>One subject was airlifted out of the Deep Lake area after a rescue team reached him and found him unable to walk due to severe dehydration. Two others had to be given emergency care in the field, including IV fluids. All three hikers were said to be in good physical condition.</p> <p>August in Kittitas County sees hundreds of hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail and other back country users in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.</p> <p>Hiking up trails and overpasses in 90+ degree weather can plague even the toughest of hikers. Heat-related illnesses and emergencies can come on very suddenly and can be deadly.</p> <p>During periods of extreme heat, officials suggest considering hiking in the early morning hours when it's cooler, or later in the evening, take your time, be smart, and stay hydrated.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Oregon firefighter dies battling wildland fire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/firefighter-dies-in-oregon-while-fighting-wildfire-in-josephine-county-department-forestry-bureau-land-management-wildland-fire-odf-southwest-district">https://komonews.com/news/local/firefighter-dies-in-oregon-while-fighting-wildfire-in-josephine-county-department-forestry-bureau-land-management-wildland-fire-odf-southwest-district</a>
GIST	<p>An Oregon firefighter died Thursday while fighting a wildland fire in Josephine County, state forestry officials said.</p> <p>The Oregon Department of Forestry and the Bureau of Land Management said Logan Taylor, 25, of Talent, Oregon, was critically injured by a falling tree Thursday while fighting the Rum Creek Fire, which is burning <a href="#">north of Galice</a>.</p> <p>He was airlifted to Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center in Medford where he later died of his injuries. Taylor was the operator of Sasquatch Reforestation, an Oregon Department of Forestry-contracted firefighting company.</p> <p>"We are extremely saddened by the passing of Logan Taylor. This loss is deeply felt by our ODF family and throughout the wildland fire community as a whole," said Tyler McCarty, ODF Southwest Oregon District Forester. "Safety remains our top priority. ODF and our partners are committed to learning from this accident and to doing everything we can to reduce the risk of similar incidents occurring in the future."</p> <p>Forestry officials said the death is under investigation.</p>

	<p>The death was reported the same day a memorial was held for <a href="#">another firefighter, Collin Hagan</a>, who was also fatally struck by a falling tree just over a week ago while <a href="#">fighting the Big Swamp Fire in the Willamette National Forest</a>.</p> <p>A firefighter working a wildfire in Jackson County was taken off the line Thursday (Aug. 18) after suffering a heat-related illness, ODF said. They were treated by personnel at the fire's staging area.</p> <p>State forestry officials say fireline leadership will be talking about these incidents with teams, "and emphasizing the importance of prioritizing safety in all aspects of firefighting operations."</p> <p>"A loss of a firefighter's life impacts the whole firefighting community, and we send our condolences to the family friends and coworkers," said Elizabeth Burghard, BLM Medford District Manager. "Safety is the number one priority for the BLM and our wildland firefighting partners. We want every firefighter to come home safely each day."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Tacoma PD rally response being questioned</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/protestor-hit-by-car-hilltop-rally-tacoma-police-response-being-questioned/5BUKQL2AF5F6ZE6HEYFHXWRAKE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/protestor-hit-by-car-hilltop-rally-tacoma-police-response-being-questioned/5BUKQL2AF5F6ZE6HEYFHXWRAKE/</a>
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — A rally in Tacoma's Hilltop neighborhood took a scary turn when a protester was hit by a driver. Now organizers are accusing Tacoma police of not properly responding to the situation.</p> <p>The gathering aimed to highlight the gentrification happening in the neighborhood and also focused on bringing the community together again.</p> <p>Signs read, "Bring back \$900 apartments!"</p> <p>"There has been a lot of gentrification (and) displacement happening in the Hilltop. It's been happening for years," said Jamika Scott, an organizer with the Tacoma Action Collective, which put together the event. Scott says she and her mom used to live in the neighborhood but now can no longer afford to.</p> <p>"(Our goal is to) reclaim space and demand that our voices be heard and that our hopes and dreams and struggles are considered when development is progressed," Scott said.</p> <p>Part of the event included a demonstration at Martin Luther King Jr. Way and South 19th Street, near longtime businesses like Speed-E-Mart and The Fish House Café. It's also where light rail construction now bisects MLK and where home prices are skyrocketing.</p> <p>"Just to see what has happened — a lot of the area was devalued. A lot of the African Americans had to move out. And once that happened, you start bringing stuff in, reinvesting," said Joseph Lawyer, a Tacoma resident.</p> <p>That displacement and gentrification is what protestors were highlighting, and some took to the street.</p> <p>"Essentially, you're causing them some inconvenience, and so ... usually we leave room for people to pass," Scott said.</p> <p>However, Scott says one car didn't go around the group but instead started driving through them.</p> <p>"They kind of moved in front to the car to redirect them. The car stopped, and for whatever reason, they went forward and hit the organizer," Scott said.</p> <p>She says when the group was trying to speak with the driver about what happened, the situation escalated.</p>

	<p>“That’s when the driver grabbed the organizer’s arm and then proceeded to drive off, pulling the driver along with them,” she said.</p> <p>A photo shows the driver holding on to the organizer’s hand through the driver’s side window.</p> <p>They got free, and Scott says the driver left the scene. (The organizer identifies with they/them pronouns.)</p> <p>“They are in pain. They have a sprained wrist and a sprained shoulder, I believe,” she said. “(This incident is) the thing that changed this from a joyous moment to one where somebody could’ve been even more gravely injured or killed,” she said.</p> <p>The Tacoma Action Collective says another major concern is that a Tacoma police officer was on scene but didn’t take a report.</p> <p>“The officer is there. The officer turned on his lights and pulled on to oncoming traffic, so it’s apparent the officer saw something,” Scott said.</p> <p>Tacoma police say the officer did call to report protestors in the street, and they’re currently looking for surveillance video to aid their investigation. They also want to know what the police officer on scene witnessed.</p> <p>“It’s just very frustrating for the community,” Scott said. “When you get to the truth of the matter, people can heal from it,” she said.</p> <p>TPD says they did not receive any 911 calls from either party on the day of the incident and are still waiting to speak with the organizer who was hit by the car.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 King Co. monkeypox health emergency</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/king-county-declares-public-health-emergency-over-monkeypox-outbreak/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/king-county-declares-public-health-emergency-over-monkeypox-outbreak/</a>
GIST	<p>King County officially <a href="#">declared the local monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency</a> on Friday afternoon, as infections continue to rise in Seattle and other parts of the state.</p> <p>“We are fortunate to have one of the best public health organizations in the nation right here in King County, and today’s action ensures they will have all the tools needed to take on the challenge of monkeypox,” King County Executive Dow Constantine said in a statement. “The health of our community is paramount, and responding quickly and nimbly to monkeypox will help keep more of us safe.”</p> <p>The local emergency proclamation will give Public Health — Seattle &amp; King County more flexibility in hiring and contracting protocols, according to the statement. For example, it allows King County staff to authorize overtime and to make temporary staffing appointments to respond to the emergency.</p> <p>The proclamation went into effect immediately to support efforts to contain the virus, which can cause a rash, fever, headache, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes and fatigue. It can take up to three weeks after being exposed to the virus before symptoms begin.</p> <p>As of Friday, Washington had counted 333 monkeypox infections, 275 of which were confirmed in King County, according to the state Department of Health. <a href="#">Two weeks ago</a>, the state had confirmed 166 cases. Public health officials have also recorded 21 cases in Pierce County, seven in Snohomish County, five in Spokane County, five in Clark County and four in Yakima County, DOH said.</p> <p>The majority of cases have been confirmed among men who had sexual or close intimate contact with other men, though anyone can contract the virus through skin-to-skin (or sometimes prolonged face-to-face) contact, state health officials have said.</p>

“It’s an important time for public health to have the flexibility it needs to be able to respond and reach the communities most impacted, including ensuring equitable access to vaccine,” Dennis Worsham, interim county public health director, said in the statement.

Monkeypox vaccines have been particularly scarce in the region, and while Constantine’s proclamation will not bring more doses to the state in the near term, it will help public health teams more quickly deliver vaccines when larger quantities become available, according to the executive’s office.

In late July, [King County health officials said](#) they had only about 6% of the vaccine supply needed to provide two-dose shots to those considered at high or elevated risk for the disease. The state is adopting a “first-dose prioritization” strategy, which means recipients will initially get only one shot of the two-dose vaccine in an attempt to stretch supply for as many high-risk people as possible.

Currently, those considered at highest risk and who are eligible for a monkeypox vaccine in King County include anyone who has had sexual or close, intimate contact with someone who has tested positive for monkeypox. Men who have sex with men and have had more than 10 sex partners in the past three months; a history of early syphilis or gonorrhea in the past year; or attended a bathhouse or other public sex venue in the last three months, [among other criteria](#), are also eligible for a vaccine.

“Removing any procedural barriers will help us be as effective as possible as we expect a continued busy fall for Public Health, health care providers and community partners, including the possible rollout of new COVID-19 boosters, flu shots, and preventing more cases of MPV in our community,” Worsham said, using the term some agencies prefer for the virus.

[San Francisco](#) and [New York City](#) became the first cities in the country to declare a health emergency over the outbreak in late July, though the federal government gave a similar announcement in early August in hopes of securing funding and other resources to treat and vaccinate those who are infected. The [World Health Organization](#) also issued a global health emergency in July.

If you live in King County and are eligible for a vaccine, public health officials recommend contacting your health care provider or Public Health — Seattle & King County at 800-756-5437.

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## Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	<b>08/22 New sites thrive on misinformation, hate</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-media-misinformation/">https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-media-misinformation/</a>
GIST	<p>A day after a mass shooting in Buffalo, New York last May, the video-sharing website BitChute was amplifying a far-right conspiracy theory that the massacre was a so-called false flag operation, meant to discredit gun-loving Americans.</p> <p>Three of the top 15 videos on the site that day blamed U.S. federal agents instead of the true culprit: a white-supremacist teenager who had vowed to “kill as many blacks as possible” before shooting 13 people, killing 10. Other popular videos uploaded by BitChute users falsely claimed COVID-19 vaccines caused cancers that “literally eat you” and spread the debunked claim that Microsoft founder Bill Gates caused a global baby-formula shortage.</p> <p>BitChute has boomed as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook tighten rules to combat misinformation and hate speech. An upstart BitChute rival, Odysee, has also taken off. Both promote themselves as free-speech havens, and they’re at the forefront of a fast-growing alternative media system that delivers once-fringe ideas to millions of people worldwide.</p>



Searching the two sites on major news topics plunges viewers into a labyrinth of outlandish conspiracy theories, racist abuse and graphic violence. As their viewership has surged since 2019, they have cultivated a devoted audience of mostly younger men, according to data from digital intelligence firm Similarweb.

Online misinformation, though usually legal, triggers real-world harm. U.S. election workers have faced a [wave of death threats and harassment](#) inspired by former President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was rigged, which also fueled the deadly Jan. 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol riot. Reuters [interviews with a dozen people](#) accused of terrorizing election workers revealed that some had [acted on bogus information they found on BitChute](#) and almost all had consumed content on sites popular among the far-right.

BitChute and Odysee both host hundreds of videos inspired by the QAnon conspiracy theory, whose supporters have been arrested for threatening politicians, abducting children and blocking a bridge near Arizona's Hoover Dam with an armored truck full of guns and ammunition.

"Platforms such as BitChute and Odysee have had a seismic impact on the disinformation landscape," said Joe Ondrak of Logically, a British firm that works with governments and other organizations to reduce the harm of misinformation. The sites, he said, had become the "first port of call" for conspiracists to publish videos.

BitChute and Odysee say they comply with the law by, for example, removing terrorism-related material, and that they have rules banning racist content or incitement of violence. At the same time, the companies defended the rights of extremists to express themselves on their sites and downplayed the importance of their content. "BitChute's North Star is free speech, which is the cornerstone of a free and democratic society," BitChute said in a statement to Reuters. Odysee said that right-wing and conspiracy content didn't define the platform, which it said is focusing on generating science- and technology-related videos.

Despite the platforms' rules, their users routinely publish overtly racist videos and post comments that call for violence, a Reuters review of the sites found. BitChute and Odysee didn't respond to questions about content that appeared to violate the sites' guidelines.

All social media platforms publish standards saying they don't accept extreme or hateful content, said Callum Hood of the Center for Countering Digital Hate in London. "The real test is: Do they live up to those standards? With BitChute and Odysee, the answer is an emphatic no."

Some academics who have researched BitChute and Odysee say their relaxed content-moderation practices result in sites that are dominated by incendiary content that most online publishers routinely reject. Benjamin Horne, a social scientist at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and two colleagues reviewed more than 440,000 BitChute videos and found that 12% of channels received more than 85% of the engagement. "Almost all of those channels contain far-right conspiracies or extreme hate speech," their report concluded.

Reuters searches of the sites show that their most popular videos are often full of abusive content and misinformation that grossly distort news events.

The top BitChute and Odysee videos in searches for "Buffalo shooting" assert that the massacre never happened. Three of the top 10 on Odysee claimed that Black survivors and witnesses were actors. "It's payday in the ghetto," said one commentator. Another video defended the racist theory that motivated the shooter: that whites are being "replaced" by non-whites through migration and population growth. The only purely factual video among BitChute's top 10 results attracted a slew of racist comments, with one viewer describing the shooter as a "patriot" and his victims as "dumb n-----s."

Searching for "COVID" on BitChute one recent day produced a short film called Plandemic as the top result. Plandemic was banned by YouTube and Facebook for its potentially harmful misinformation,



including the claim that wearing a facemask “literally activates your own virus” and makes you sick. At least seven of the top 10 “COVID” search results on Odysee also contained falsehoods – for example, that vaccines contain dangerous nanoparticles or have side-effects that are “like a nuclear bomb.”

It’s a similar story with a widely reported atrocity of the Russia-Ukraine war. Nine out of the top 10 search results on BitChute for “Bucha massacre” theorized that the killing by Russian soldiers of Ukrainian citizens was a hoax intended to escalate U.S. involvement in the war, or that it was the work of Ukrainian soldiers, British agents or “Nazis.”

Identical YouTube searches on these topics produced almost all factual reports from established news organizations. This is consistent with YouTube’s policy of prioritizing information from what it calls “authoritative sources” on sensitive topics or events.

BitChute and Odysee are hardly the only sites spreading misinformation. Social media giants such as Facebook and YouTube have also struggled to contain such content, but they have responded with more aggressive moderation policies and practices.

A more direct competitor to BitChute and Odysee is Rumble, a larger video-sharing site that attracts right-wing users. Rumble also touts itself as a free-speech champion and attracts thousands of videos promoting conspiracy theories. But Rumble has mainstream ambitions and better financial backing, and the company moderates its content enough to make it palatable to app stores run by Apple and Google – a key growth driver for any digital business.

Founded in 2013 by Chris Pavlovski, a Canadian entrepreneur, Rumble started as a clearing house for viral videos about children and animals. By 2020, Pavlovski was capitalizing on anti-Big Tech sentiment to attract prominent right-wing commentators, and the following year won financial backing from billionaire Peter Thiel, a Republican kingmaker. Thiel didn’t reply to a request for comment.

Today, Rumble offers a mix of pets and politics, with one foot in the febrile, pro-Trump world where the 2020 election was stolen and climate change doesn’t exist. Rumble said in a statement that the platform offered a “wide variety” of information, including a channel featuring Reuters content. A Reuters spokesperson said Rumble is a customer that pays to publish Reuters content.

Rumble said its audience is growing rapidly because it trusts adults “to make up their own minds after hearing all sides.” But the platform does limit some extreme speech. Search for the N-word on Rumble, for instance, and you get a message: “No videos found.”

The same search on BitChute and Odysee returns hundreds of racist videos. BitChute co-founder and Chief Executive Ray Vahey and Odysee co-founder Jeremy Kauffman are self-styled libertarians who see their creations as safe zones for free speech – no matter how false or repellent.

The onslaught of vile content attracted by that philosophy caused one of BitChute’s three founders to quit and got the platform banned from mainstream app stores. Odysee has managed to stay in the Apple app store, but only by blocking searches for COVID-19 in its app.

Apple said in a statement that it only permits COVID-19 information in apps from governments and other “recognized entities.” The company did not answer questions about whether the extremists and white supremacists on Odysee are permitted under Apple guidelines, which ban offensive references to racial, religious and other groups.

Both BitChute and Odysee have struggled to find workable financial models in an increasingly crowded market, even as both quickly amassed huge audiences, attracting hundreds of millions of site visits annually.

Odysee's story starts with a frisbee-playing American eccentric who sought to finance the site by inventing a new cryptocurrency. BitChute has roots in northern Thailand, where a reclusive British expat decided that something had to be done about internet censorship.

'Kill 'em all'

Vahey, 45, is a software designer who lives in the sleepy suburbs of Chiang Mai. Before starting BitChute, Vahey created animated nursery rhymes for a YouTube channel called RockstarLittle. The songs, among them "Incy Wincy Spider" and "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," also appear on BitChute under its "Education" category, where they're mixed with videos about chemtrails – the conspiracy theory that governments are secretly spraying toxins from aircraft – and security-camera footage of a hooded man shooting a Brazilian shop assistant in the head.

Vahey declined to be interviewed for this story but has detailed his vision in recorded talks with BitChute users posted to the site. In one recent talk, he recalled a "golden age" when the internet had fewer restrictions. "It seems like the more censorship has grown, the more society has been ripped apart," he said.

Bit Chute Ltd was incorporated in Britain in 2017 by Vahey and two other Brits. Rich Jones, a software developer by training, is the company's chief operations officer. He is 53, lives in England and, on his LinkedIn page, describes Vahey as "a former classmate and long-time friend." Jones also declined to comment.

Andy Munarriz, a 53-year-old telecoms expert, is BitChute's third co-founder. "Around this time YouTube, Facebook and others were removing contributors, and Ray felt free speech was under attack," Munarriz told Reuters. Vahey started BitChute in his spare time, running it from his Chiang Mai home.

Vahey was shocked when his platform "took off like a rocket," he recalled in an interview published on BitChute in December. "It was overwhelming. The next day, I had to scale up. And the next day, I had to scale up again."

Horne, the BitChute researcher, said the platform owes its early success to the prominent U.S. conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. His Infowars show joined BitChute in late 2017 and gained popularity as YouTube and other platforms evicted Jones the following year.

Among other falsehoods, Jones championed the theory that the 2012 Sandy Hook school massacre was a hoax. Twenty children and six staff members were fatally shot; Jones claimed their families were actors and the shooting was a false-flag operation concocted by a government that wanted to seize citizens' guns. Today, videos from a variety of content creators on BitChute and Odysee make strikingly similar claims about the Buffalo shooting.

A Texas jury recently ordered Jones to pay \$50 million in damages to the parents of one child killed in the shooting. A spokesperson for Infowars and a lawyer for Jones did not respond to requests for comment.

Horne's team collected and analyzed more than three million videos from 61,000 BitChute channels posted between June 2019 and December 2021, finding that almost all of the platform's most popular videos were full of misinformation and hate speech. Horne said the researchers found a "recruitment video" for Atomwaffen Division, which the Southern Poverty Law Center describes as a "terroristic neo-Nazi organization." Federal and state authorities have charged Atomwaffen members with crimes including murder.

Horne said he reported the video to the Federal Bureau of Investigation but didn't hear back. The FBI declined to comment. The video is no longer available on BitChute, which didn't respond to questions about what happened to it.

Experts say Atomwaffen Division disbanded in 2020. A former leader of the group, John Denton, pleaded guilty in 2020 for his part in a racially motivated campaign of harassment and was sentenced to 41 months in prison. Neither Denton nor his lawyer responded to requests for comment.

The comment sections beneath some of the BitChute videos that Horne's team reviewed contained "high amounts of hate speech, most of it anti-Semitic," Horne said. Reuters also found dozens of videos featuring white men fighting Black men, with comments extolling the violence: "N----- stomp fuck yeah." One video consisted of graphic footage of a man being burned to death. "They are the scum of the world," commented one viewer, referring to Black people. "Kill 'em all."

In the December interview, Vahey said he often sees opinions he disagrees with on BitChute, but "that's part of accepting what free speech is." For Munarriz, one of the company's co-founders, it was too much. He quit in January 2019, alarmed at BitChute's direction.

"No matter what community guidelines you put in place, or how hard you police, objectionable content would still make its way onto the platform under the guise of 'free speech,'" Munarriz told Reuters. "Why take on that fight? The intention of BitChute is not to be a destination for objectionable content, but in the real world that's what happens."

In theory, BitChute users can filter the content they see by choosing one of three "sensitivity" settings: "Normal," "NSFW" ("not safe for work") and "NSFL" ("not safe for life"). In practice, because BitChute's uploaders choose these settings, even "Normal" videos can include disturbing footage of suicides and killings.

The Buffalo shooter livestreamed his rampage on Twitch, a platform owned by Amazon, which quickly removed it. But the gruesome footage was reposted on BitChute, where it stayed for days, before eventually being taken down for depicting what BitChute called "abhorrent violence" on a page explaining the removal.

BitChute didn't respond to a request for comment on why the video wasn't taken down sooner.

Since 2020, under rules enforced by the British media regulator Ofcom, BitChute must protect the public from "harmful content." This means, primarily, content that would be deemed a criminal offense under laws relating to terrorism and child sexual abuse, or content that incites violence or hatred against particular groups. Ofcom can impose heavy fines or even suspend a platform.

Ofcom and BitChute told Reuters they had consulted with each other on content to ensure compliance – "while maintaining our free speech guidelines," added BitChute. But that doesn't mean BitChute has removed all potentially harmful content. Ofcom told Reuters that the regulations don't require BitChute to proactively police itself; rather, BitChute only has to remove content that someone – for example, a user or advocacy group – has reported as a violation of its terms and conditions. Moreover, the regulations apply only to BitChute's videos and not to its user comments.

A Reuters review of BitChute's British site found myriad examples of content promoting hate and violence, including the videos of white men beating black men and the racial slurs in their comment sections.

Ofcom said it hadn't launched any investigations or issued any fines under the 2020 regulations against BitChute or any other company.

BitChute issued a public report in June on how it had moderated tens of thousands of videos. Most were flagged for copyright issues; others promoted terrorism, violent extremism or incited hatred. BitChute said that, in most cases, it either removed the videos or restricted their distribution in certain countries.

Reuters found that some videos blocked by BitChute in Europe remain on BitChute in the United States, where free-speech protections for social media are especially robust. In addition to constitutional

protections, Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act stipulates that social media firms cannot be held legally responsible for the content that users post on their platforms.

The BitChute content blocked in Britain, but still freely available in America, includes swastika-adorned videos that attacked Jews and Blacks, and adoring montages about Adolf Hitler with names such as , “We Need You Now – Happy Birthday Mein Fuhrer.”

‘A lizard person’

BitChute’s online traffic grew 63% in 2021 over the previous year, to 514 million visits, according to Similarweb, the digital intelligence firm. For comparison, that’s more than double the online audience of MSNBC.com, the website of the cable news channel known for left-leaning opinion hosts.

But BitChute’s funding model appears fragile. In the December interview, Vahey said he had turned down investors because he refused to compromise on free speech. He said he mostly covered his monthly running costs of \$50,000 through donations and subscriptions. The site also has some advertising.

BitChute’s closest rival, Odysee, attracted 292 million visits last year. But it has taken a different path to get there.

Odysee grew from a company called LBRY (pronounced “library”), co-founded in 2015 by Jeremy Kauffman, a U.S. tech entrepreneur and radical libertarian who financed LBRY by creating his own cryptocurrency. The company’s other founders did not respond to requests for comment.

Kauffman, 37, lives in New Hampshire, where he’s running a long-shot campaign for the U.S. Senate on the state’s Libertarian Party ticket in November’s midterm elections. His hardline version of the Party’s anti-government philosophy includes abolishing the Federal Reserve, the Internal Revenue Service and child-labor laws.

Kauffman promoted his Senate campaign with a bizarre video posted on Twitter in May. He addresses the camera in an ill-fitting crocodile costume and speaks as images flash on the screen of snarling aliens, Godzilla and President Joe Biden with a forked tongue. “I want to become a lizard person,” Kauffman says. “I would like to rule you.”

The act appeared to reference the lizard-people conspiracy theory, which holds that governing elites are really blood-sucking alien reptiles in human form.

Kauffman also posts provocative statements on Twitter. “Being unvaccinated and being Black are both choices,” he tweeted in August 2021, with a picture of a light-skinned Michael Jackson. He told Reuters the tweet was a joke.

“I think it’s funny,” said Kauffman, the sole occupant of LBRY’s plainly furnished headquarters in downtown Manchester, New Hampshire. “If you don’t think it’s funny,” he said, “you don’t have to look at it.”

In college at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, Kauffman studied computer science and physics, and played competitive frisbee. He had little experience in publishing when, in 2015, he set up LBRY with four others, promising to bring “freedom back to the web,” according to an early investor pitch.

LBRY’s business model relied on sales of its own cryptocurrency, called LBC. Launched on the cusp of a crypto boom, the price jumped, pushing the company’s value to \$1.2 billion.

But in March 2021, the Securities and Exchange Commission sued LBRY, alleging that selling a cryptocurrency to finance its operations amounted to an unregistered securities offering. Kauffman attacked the commission in tweets and interviews as “monsters,” and told Reuters he had spent \$2 million

on legal fees on a “Kafka-esque” fight. The Securities and Exchange Commission declined to comment on the case, which is still pending.

Even before the suit, demand for LBC was faltering. After hitting a high of \$160 in 2016, LBC’s value has since fallen to about two cents.

The company started a streaming platform in late 2019 called LBRY.TV. It courted creators who specialized in technology, cryptocurrencies or science, but also attracted conspiracy theorists and extremists seeking an alternative to YouTube. Paul Webb, a web developer who joined LBRY in 2017, said he raised objections when he found out the site featured videos of a leader of the Proud Boys, the far-right group whose current leader and four associates are now charged in connection with the Jan. 6 Capitol riot.

On a video call with Kauffman, Webb presented research on the Proud Boys by groups that track extremists. Webb said he argued that “we have a responsibility not to give people like that a platform.” Kauffman disagreed and said the controversy generated publicity for LBRY, according to Webb, who now works at a digital design agency based in Canada.

Asked about the exchange, Kauffman said: “Even morally questionable groups, such as Reuters journalists or the Proud Boys, should be allowed to speak to others that want to hear them.”

LBRY.TV was rebuilt and rebranded as a new website, Odysee, in late 2020. The following year, the operation was put into a new subsidiary of LBRY called Odysee Holdings Inc, with a new chief executive. Kauffman remains the CEO of LBRY, but Odysee is now run by Julian Chandra, both men said in interviews. Chandra had worked at the popular Chinese-owned short-video app TikTok before joining LBRY and taking over Odysee.

He told Reuters he wants to make Odysee a profitable platform that serves a bigger, more mainstream audience, moving beyond Kauffman’s libertarian politics and his original vision for the video-sharing site. Odysee is seeking to grow revenue through advertising and premium ad-free subscriptions.

Odysee’s traffic has grown exponentially. Like BitChute, it has fed off the turbulence surrounding COVID-19 lockdowns, mass vaccinations and Trump’s false claims about the U.S. election in November 2020. That month, Odysee’s visits doubled to about 6 million, according to Similarweb. In January 2021 – the month Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol – it almost tripled again, to 17 million. By August, the total almost doubled again, to 33 million.

Odysee still bills itself as a bulwark for free speech. When YouTube last year removed several videos condemning alleged human rights abuses by China against Uyghur Muslims, Odysee provided an alternative home. It did the same for RT and Sputnik after YouTube and Facebook blocked the Russian propaganda channels in March. In a statement on Twitter, Odysee said: “We are not banning any news network. It’s a slippery slope.”

It remains a sanctuary for controversial figures. Megan Squire, a professor at Elon University in North Carolina who researches online extremism, has identified more than 100 channels on Odysee from right-wing extremists and conspiracy theorists.

Chandra acknowledged that such content existed on Odysee but said it didn’t define the platform. He said the company removes content that promotes terrorism, hatred or violence towards other groups.

Yet Odysee remains a home to neo-Nazis. Joseph Jordan, who produces videos under the pseudonym of “Eric Striker,” co-founded the white supremacist National Justice Party. In his videos on Odysee, he praises Hitler, denies the Holocaust happened and argues for policies protecting whites against Blacks. Jordan did not respond to a request for comment.

	“You want me to delete this person because of what exactly? He hasn’t broken any laws,” Chandra said. “You don’t like a channel, don’t watch the channel. It’s very simple.”
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Hotel, travel targeted by fake reservations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-target-hotel-and-travel-companies-with-fake-reservations/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-target-hotel-and-travel-companies-with-fake-reservations/</a>
GIST	<p>A hacker tracked as TA558 has upped their activity this year, running phishing campaigns that target multiple hotels and firms in the hospitality and travel space.</p> <p>The threat actor uses a set of 15 distinct malware families, usually remote access trojans (RATs), to gain access to the target systems, perform surveillance, steal key data, and eventually siphon money from customers.</p> <p>TA558 has been active since at least 2018, but <a href="#">Proofpoint</a> has recently seen an uptick in its activities, possibly linked to the rebound of tourism after two years of COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p><b>Recent TA558 campaigns</b></p> <p>In 2022, TA558 switched from using macro-laced documents in its phishing emails and adopted RAR and ISO file attachments or embedded URLs in the messages.</p> <p>Similar changes have been <a href="#">seen with other threat actors</a> in response <a href="#">to Microsoft's decision to block VBA and XL4 macros</a> in Office, which hackers historically used for loading, dropping, and installing malware via malicious documents.</p> <p>The phishing emails that initiate the infection chain are written in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, targeting companies in North America, Western Europe, and Latin America.</p> <p>The email topics revolve around making a booking on the target organization, pretending to come from conference organizers, tourist office agents, and other sources that the recipients can't easily dismiss.</p> <p>Victims who click on the URL in the message body, which is purported to be a reservation link, will receive an ISO file from a remote resource.</p> <p>The archive contains a batch file that launches a PowerShell script which eventually drops the RAT payload onto the victim's computer and creates a scheduled task for persistence.</p> <p>In most of the cases Proofpoint observed this year, the payload was AsyncRAT or Loda, while Revenge RAT, XtremeRAT, CaptureTela, and BluStealer were also deployed on a smaller scale.</p> <p>For example, one 2022 campaign used QuickBooks invoice lures instead of room reservations and dropped Revenge RAT exclusively.</p> <p>Having compromised hotel systems with RAT malware, TA558 moves deeper into the network to steal customer data, stored credit card details, and modify the client-facing websites to divert reservation payments.</p> <p>In July 2022, The Marino Boutique Hotel in Lisbon, Portugal, had its Booking.com account hacked, and the intruder stole €500,000 in four days from unsuspecting customers who paid to book a room.</p> <p>While the involvement of TA558, in that case, wasn't proven, it matches the threat actor's TTPs and targeting scope and at least gives an example of how they could monetize their access to hotel systems.</p>

	Other ways for TA558 to make money would be to sell or use the stolen credit card details, sell client PII, blackmail high-interest individuals, or sell access to the compromised hotel's network to ransomware gangs.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 WordPress sites hacked; push malware</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/wordpress-sites-hacked-with-fake-cloudflare-ddos-alerts-pushing-malware/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/wordpress-sites-hacked-with-fake-cloudflare-ddos-alerts-pushing-malware/</a>
GIST	<p>WordPress sites are being hacked to display fake Cloudflare DDoS protection pages to distribute malware that installs the NetSupport RAT and the RaccoonStealer password-stealing Trojan.</p> <p>DDoS (distributed denial of service) protection screens are commonplace on the internet, protecting sites from bots that ping them with bogus requests, aiming to overwhelm them with garbage traffic.</p> <p>Internet users treat these "welcome screens" as an unavoidable short-term annoyance that keeps their favorite online resources protected from malicious operatives. Unfortunately, this familiarity serves as an excellent opportunity for malware campaigns.</p> <p><b>Malware through fake Cloudflare prompts</b></p> <p>As detailed in a report by <a href="#">Sucuri</a>, threat actors are hacking poorly protected WordPress sites to add a heavily obfuscated JavaScript payload that displays a fake Cloudflare protection DDoS screen.</p> <p>This screen...requests that the visitor clicks on a button to bypass the DDoS protection screen. However, clicking on the button will download a 'security_install.iso' file to the computer, which pretends to be a tool required to bypass the DDoS verification.</p> <p>The victims are then told to open the security_install.iso, which they pretend is an application called DDOS GUARD, and enter the code shown.</p> <p>When a user opens the security_install.iso, they will see a file called security_install.exe, which is actually a Windows shortcut that runs a PowerShell command from the debug.txt file.</p> <p>Ultimately, this causes a chain of scripts to run that display the fake DDoS code needed to view the site, as well as installing the NetSupport RAT, a remote access trojan used extensively in malicious campaigns today.</p> <p>Additionally, the scripts will download the Raccoon Stealer password-stealing trojan and launch it on the device.</p> <p>Raccoon Stealer returned to operations <a href="#">in June</a> this year, when its authors released its second major version and made it available to cybercriminals under a subscription model.</p> <p>Raccoon 2.0 targets passwords, cookies, auto-fill data, and credit cards saved on web browsers, a wide range of cryptocurrency wallets, and it's also capable of performing file exfiltration and taking screenshots of the victim's desktop.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Hackers steal crypto from Bitcoin ATMs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-steal-crypto-from-bitcoin-atms-by-exploiting-zero-day-bug/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-steal-crypto-from-bitcoin-atms-by-exploiting-zero-day-bug/</a>
GIST	<p>Hackers have exploited a zero-day vulnerability in General Bytes Bitcoin ATM servers to steal cryptocurrency from customers.</p> <p>When customers would deposit or purchase cryptocurrency via the ATM, the funds would instead be siphoned off by the hackers</p>



General Bytes is the manufacturer of Bitcoin ATMs that, depending on the product, allow people to purchase or sell over 40 different cryptocurrencies.

The Bitcoin ATMs are controlled by a remote [Crypto Application Server](#) (CAS), which manages the ATM's operation, what cryptocurrencies are supported, and executes the purchases and sales of cryptocurrency on exchanges.

### **Hackers exploit CAS zero-day**

Yesterday, BleepingComputer was contacted by a General Bytes customer who told us that hackers were stealing bitcoin from their ATMs.

According to a General Bytes security advisory published on August 18th, the attacks were conducted using a zero-day vulnerability in the company's Crypto Application Server (CAS).

"The attacker was able to create an admin user remotely via CAS administrative interface via a URL call on the page that is used for the default installation on the server and creating the first administration user," reads the General Bytes advisory.

"This vulnerability has been present in CAS software since version 20201208."

General Bytes believes that the threat actors scanned the internet for exposed servers running on TCP ports 7777 or 443, including servers hosted at Digital Ocean and General Bytes' own cloud service.

The threat actors then exploited the bug to add a default admin user named 'gb' to the CAS and modified the 'buy' and 'sell' crypto settings and 'invalid payment address' to use a cryptocurrency wallet under the hacker's control.

Once the threat actors modified these settings, any cryptocurrency received by CAS was forwarded to the hackers instead.

"Two-way ATMs started to forward coins to the attacker's wallet when customers sent coins to ATM," explains the security advisory.

General Bytes is warning customers not to operate their Bitcoin ATMs until they have applied two server patch releases, 20220531.38 and 20220725.22, on their servers.

They also provided a [checklist of steps](#) to perform on the devices before they are put back into service.

It is important to remember that the threat actors would not have been able to perform these attacks if the servers were firewalled only to allow connections from trusted IP addresses.

Therefore, it is vital to [configure firewalls](#) only to allow access to the Crypto Application Server from a trusted IP address, such as from the ATM's location or the customer's offices.

According to information provided by [BinaryEdge](#), there are currently eighteen General Bytes Crypto Application Servers still exposed to the Internet, with the majority located in Canada.

It is unclear how many servers were breached using this vulnerability and how much cryptocurrency was stolen.

BleepingComputer contacted General Bytes yesterday with further questions about the attack but did not receive a response.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/blackbyte-ransomware-gang-returns-twitter-presence-tiered-pricing">https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/blackbyte-ransomware-gang-returns-twitter-presence-tiered-pricing</a>
GIST	<p>The BlackByte ransomware group, which has connections to Conti, has resurfaced after a hiatus with a new social media presence on Twitter and new extortion methods borrowed from the better-known LockBit 3.0 gang.</p> <p>According to reports, the <a href="#">ransomware group is using various Twitter handles</a> to promote the updated extortion strategy, leak site, and data auctions. The new scheme lets victims to pay to extend the publishing of their stolen data by 24 hours (\$5,000), download the data (\$200,000) or destroy all the data (\$300,000). It's a strategy the <a href="#">LockBit 3.0 group</a> already pioneered.</p> <p>"It is not surprising BlackByte is taking a page out of LockBit's book by not only announcing a version 2 of their ransomware operation but also adopting the pay to delay, download, or destroy extortion model," says Nicole Hoffman, senior cyber-threat intelligence analyst at Digital Shadows, who calls the market for ransomware groups "competitive" and explains LockBit is one of the most prolific and active ransomware groups globally.</p> <p>Hoffman adds it is possible BlackByte is trying to gain a competitive advantage or trying to gain media attention to recruit and grow its operations.</p> <p>"Although the <a href="#">double-extortion model</a> is not broken by any means, this new model may be a way for groups to introduce multiple revenue streams," she says. "It will be interesting to see if this new model becomes a trend among other ransomware groups or just a fad that is not widely adopted."</p> <p>Oliver Tavakoli, CTO at Vectra, calls this approach an "interesting business innovation."</p> <p>"It allows smaller payments to be collected from victims who are almost certain they won't pay the ransom but want to hedge for a day or two as they investigate the extent of the breach," he says.</p> <p>John Bambenek, principal threat hunter at Netenrich, points out ransomware actors have played around with a variety of models to maximize their revenue.</p> <p>"This almost looks like an experiment on if they can get lower tiers of money," he says. "I just don't know why anyone would pay them anything except for destroying all the data. That said, attackers, like any industry, are experimenting with business models all the time."</p> <p><b>Causing Disruption With Common Tactics</b></p> <p>BlackByte has remained one of the more common ransomware variants, infecting organizations worldwide and previously employing a worm capability similar to Conti's precursor Ryuk. But Harrison Van Riper, senior intelligence analyst at Red Canary, notes that BlackByte is just one of several ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) operations that have the potential to cause a lot of disruption with relatively common tactics and techniques.</p> <p>"Like most ransomware operators, the techniques BlackByte uses are not particularly sophisticated, but that doesn't mean they aren't impactful," he says. "The option to extend the victim's timeline is likely an effort to get at least some sort of payment from victims who may want extra time for a variety of reasons: to determine legitimacy and scope of the data theft or continue ongoing internal discussion on how to respond, to name a couple of reasons."</p> <p>Tavakoli says cybersecurity pros should view BlackByte less as an individual static actor and more as a brand that can have a new marketing campaign tied to it at any time; he notes the set of underlying techniques to carry off the attacks seldom change.</p> <p>"The precise malware or entry vector utilized by a given ransomware brand may change over time, but the sum of techniques used across all of them are pretty constant," he says. "Get your controls in place, ensure</p>

you have detection capabilities for attacks which target your valuable data, and run simulated attacks to test your people, processes and procedures."

### **BlackByte Targets Critical Infrastructure**

Bambenek says that because BlackByte has made some mistakes (such as an error with accepting payments in the new site), from his perspective it may be a little lower on the skill level than others.

"However, open source reporting says they are still compromising big targets, including those in critical infrastructure," he says. "The day is coming when a significant infrastructure provider is taken down via ransomware that will create more than just a supply chain issue than we saw with Colonial Pipeline."

In February, the FBI and US Secret Service released a [joint cybersecurity advisory](#) on BlackByte, warning that attackers deploying the ransomware had infected organizations in at least three US critical infrastructure sectors.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Lure: state-sponsored APTs dangle job ops</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/remote-workforce/state-sponsored-apt-dangle-job-ops-lure-spy-victims">https://www.darkreading.com/remote-workforce/state-sponsored-apt-dangle-job-ops-lure-spy-victims</a>
GIST	<p>Fake job offers have become a top phishing tactic for state-sponsored threat actors to lure in unsuspecting targets in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many reconsider their careers amid growing demand for skilled workers and managers.</p> <p>The <a href="#">cyber-threat analyst team at PwC</a>, which has followed a prime example of this (the <a href="#">Lazarus Group's Operation In(ter)ception</a>) closely, presented a detailed account of the Lazarus campaign and how the group implemented the strategy during last week's <a href="#">Black Hat USA 2022 conference</a> in Las Vegas.</p> <p>PwC principal threat analyst Sveva Vittoria Scenarelli, who studies advanced persistent threats (APTs) in the Asia-Pacific region with an emphasis on North Korea, noted that the stakes are high.</p> <p>"This is an espionage-motivated campaign that is incredibly persistent in targeting the aerospace sector, the defense industrial base, manufacturing chemical sector, for everything from military secrets to intellectual property to confidential information of strategic interest," Scenarelli explained during her presentation at Black Hat, called "<a href="#">Talent Need Not Apply: Tradecraft and Objectives of Job-themed APT Social Engineering</a>."</p> <p>The Cybersecurity &amp; Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) agrees, and <a href="#">has warned that the threat actors</a> (aka APT38, Black Artemis, BlueNoroff, Hidden Cobra, and Stardust Chollima) "employ malicious cyberactivity to collect intelligence, conduct attacks, and generate revenue."</p> <p>Scenarelli explained that Lazarus follows up with its targets via messaging apps such as WhatsApp.</p> <p>This is "to make sure that the victims do open the malicious viewer documents or the malicious executables that the threat actor has sent," she said. "Black Artemis will also set up domains. This can be for command and control of its malicious implants to send emails that appear to come from on a legit site, or indeed to perform Web exploitation as an initial access method."</p> <p>Scenarelli explained that Black Artemis creates domains that spoof prominent job search websites like Indeed, with attractive positions at high-profile companies such as Google and Oracle. She underscored that many sites look legitimate, though there are obvious signs they are fake. For instance, the Indeed decoy site URL is Indeed.US.org, she said. Scenarelli noted that the job descriptions disguised as .docx, .pdf, or .rtx files launch when the victims click on the documents, which may enable macros.</p> <p>Similarly, Scenarelli recalled another attack by the group, which <a href="#">made off with \$625 million</a> in cryptocurrency. She warned that this variant, which PwC researchers call "Black Alicanto," is financially motivated and dangerous. In the wake of Microsoft recently <a href="#">disabling macros in Office documents</a>, Scenarelli</p>

	<p>said this malware might use .lnk files, perhaps embedded in password-protected Microsoft Word documents.</p> <p>"Threat actors are having to pivot a bit in their initial access techniques and using more and more .lnk files, ISO files, MSI installers, and stuff like that," she said. But in the background, she noted, the .lnk file is calling MSHDA.exe, which connects to a remote server to pull down a malicious JavaScript script that PwC calls "Cabbage Loader."</p> <p>This script places a .lnk file in the victim's startup folder "to ensure persistence and then pulls down a whole series of other JavaScript payloads," she explained. "These are essentially profilers that want to make sure that the actual person that's interacting with them is not a sandbox, is not a researcher, but it's actually a target of interest."</p> <p>Scenarelli concluded that Lazarus and other North Korea-based threat actors continue to exploit the growing demand for skilled people, who, despite their training and awareness of threats, can be caught off guard.</p> <p>"The job market right now is a really key area for North Korea-based threat actors," she said. "So, keep your eyes peeled, make sure you're aware of whom you're interviewing. And for the love of all that is holy, don't open those links that you get sent on LinkedIn, do not open them."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Spyware hunters expand their toolset</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/spyware-hunting-tools-mac-pc-black-hat/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.wired.com/story/spyware-hunting-tools-mac-pc-black-hat/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p><b>THE SURVEILLANCE-FOR-HIRE INDUSTRY'S</b> powerful mobile spyware tools have <a href="#">gotten increasing attention lately</a> as tech companies and governments grapple with the scale of the threat. But spyware that targets laptops and desktop PCs is extremely common in an array of cyberattacks, from state-backed espionage to financially motivated scams. Due to this growing threat, researchers from the incident response firm Volexity and Louisiana State University presented at the Black Hat security conference in Las Vegas last week new and refined tools that practitioners can use to catch more PC spyware in Windows 10, macOS 12, and Linux computers.</p> <p>Widely used PC spyware—the type that often keylogs targets, tracks the movement of their mouse and clicks, listens in through a computer's microphone, and pulls still photos or video from the camera—can be difficult to detect because attackers intentionally design it to leave a minimal footprint. Rather than installing itself on a target's hard drive like a regular application, the malware (or its most important components) exists and runs only in the target computer's memory or RAM. This means that it doesn't generate certain classic red flags, doesn't show up in regular logs, and gets wiped away when a device is restarted.</p> <p>Enter the field of “memory forensics,” which is geared precisely toward developing techniques to assess what's going on in this liminal space. At Black Hat, the researchers specifically announced new detection algorithms based on their findings for the open source memory forensics framework <a href="#">Volatility</a>.</p> <p>“Memory forensics was very different five or six years ago as far as how it was being used in the field both for incident response and by law enforcement,” Volexity director Andrew Case tells WIRED. (Case is also a lead developer of Volatility.) “It’s gotten to the point where even outside really intense malware investigations, memory forensics is needed. But for evidence or artifacts from a memory sample to be used in court or some type of legal proceeding, we need to know that the tools are working as expected and that the algorithms are validated. This latest stuff for Black Hat is really some hardcore new techniques as part of our effort to build out verified frameworks.”</p> <p>Case emphasizes that expanded spyware detection tools are needed because Volexity and other security firms regularly see real examples of hackers deploying memory-only spyware in their attacks. At the end of July, for example, Microsoft and the security firm RiskIQ <a href="#">published</a> detailed findings and mitigations to counter the Subzero malware from an Austrian commercial spyware company, DSIRF.</p>

“Observed victims [targeted with Subzero] to date include law firms, banks, and strategic consultancies in countries such as Austria, the United Kingdom, and Panama,” Microsoft and RiskIQ wrote. Subzero’s main payload, they added, “resides exclusively in memory to evade detection. It contains a variety of capabilities including keylogging, capturing screenshots, exfiltrating files, running a remote shell, and running arbitrary plugins.”

The researchers particularly focused on honing their detections for how the different operating systems talk to “hardware devices” or sensors and components like the keyboard and camera. By monitoring how the different parts of the system run and communicate with each other and looking for new behaviors or connections, memory forensic algorithms can catch and analyze more potentially malicious activity. One potential tell, for example, is to monitor an operating system process that’s always running, say the feature that lets users log in to a system, and to flag it if additional code gets injected into that process after it starts running. If code was introduced later it could be a sign of malicious manipulation.

“If you work in the incident response field, you likely see this malware all the time,” Case said during his Black Hat talk last week. “We see this targeted at our clients on a daily basis. And if you read the reports from other security vendors, it’s pretty much universal that when you have a motivated threat group targeting an organization—whether that’s a research group inside the organization, whether it’s executives, whether it’s down to just an individual person—the malware that gets deployed on those machines are going to leverage access to hardware devices for truly sensitive information.”

To do forensic analysis of what’s happening in a device’s memory at a given time, researchers dump the memory into a sort of snapshot file of everything that was in there at that moment. If your laptop has 16 GB of RAM and the memory is full, you’ll pull out a 16-GB file from it. But to detect attacks in real time, organizations need to set up forensic monitoring on their devices in advance. And not all operating systems make it easy to conduct such monitoring.

Apple, in particular, is known for locking down access to macOS and iOS to minimize system visibility. The company says it takes this approach as a security measure because, in its estimation, users shouldn’t need that level of access to operate within the tightly controlled Apple ecosystem. But the [stance has been controversial](#) for a number of reasons and has [created tension](#) with some security advocates, who say that when exploitable vulnerabilities do inevitably crop up in Apple’s software, particularly iOS, the approach gives the hackers an advantage because defenders have more limited insight and control.

“It can make exploitation harder, and it can make gaining malware persistence on a system harder,” Case says. “But it also makes forensics harder, so the argument goes both ways.”

The team was able to make progress on developing detection tools for all three major desktop operating systems, though. And Case emphasizes that the goal is simply to detect as much spyware as possible wherever it can be done as the malware proliferates more and more.

“We work with a ton of very targeted organizations around the world and in the US, and it’s organizations themselves being targeted. But also, many times, it’s individuals within the organization or within a political movement—these are the people who get targeted with this type of malware,” he says. “So the further we get on this research and the better our forensic tools are, the more we can find this behavior and make it harder for attackers to get into an environment, stay there, and get to data they want.”

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HEADLINE	08/19 Donot Team hackers update malware toolkit
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/08/donot-team-hackers-updated-its-malware.html?&amp;web_view=true">https://thehackernews.com/2022/08/donot-team-hackers-updated-its-malware.html?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	The Donot Team threat actor has updated its Jaca Windows malware toolkit with improved capabilities, including a revamped stealer module designed to plunder information from Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox browsers.

The improvements also include a new infection chain that incorporates previously undocumented components to the modular framework, Morphisec researchers Hido Cohen and Arnold Osipov [disclosed](#) in a report published last week.

Also known as APT-C-35 and Viceroy Tiger, the Donot Team is known for setting its sights on defense, diplomatic, government, and military entities in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, among others at least since 2016.

Evidence unearthed by Amnesty International in October 2021 [connected](#) the group's attack infrastructure to an Indian cybersecurity company called Innifu Labs.

Spear-phishing campaigns containing malicious Microsoft Office documents are the preferred delivery pathway for malware, followed by taking advantage of macros and other known vulnerabilities in the productivity software to launch the backdoor.

The latest findings from Morphisec build on a prior report from cybersecurity company ESET, which [detailed](#) the adversary's intrusions against military organizations based in South Asia using several versions of its yty malware framework, one of which is Jaca.

This entails the use of RTF documents that trick users into enabling macros, resulting in the execution of a piece of shellcode injected into memory that, in turn, is orchestrated to download a second-stage shellcode from its command-and-control (C2) server.

The second-stage then acts as a channel to retrieve a DLL file ("pgixedfxglmjirdc.dll") from another remote server, which kick-starts the actual infection by beaconing system information to the C2 server, establishing persistence via a Scheduled Task, and fetching the next-stage DLL ("WavemsMp.dll").

"The main purpose of this stage is to download and execute the modules used to steal the user's information," the researchers noted. "To understand which modules are used in the current infection, the malware communicates with another C2 server."

The C2 domain, for its part, is obtained by accessing an embedded link that points to a Google Drive document, allowing the malware to access a configuration that dictates the modules to be downloaded and executed.

These modules expand on the malware's features and harvest a wide range of data such as keystrokes, screenshots, files, and information stored in web browsers. Also part of the toolset is a reverse shell module that grants the actor remote access to the victim machine.

The development is yet another sign that threat actors are actively adapting their tactics and techniques that are most effective in gaining initial infection and maintaining remote access for extended periods of time.

"Defending against APTs like the Donot team requires a Defense-in-Depth strategy that uses multiple layers of security to ensure redundancy if any given layers are breached," the researchers said.

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HEADLINE	08/19 TikTok browser track all users' keystrokes?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/technology/tiktok-browser-tracking.html?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/technology/tiktok-browser-tracking.html?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>The web browser used within the <a href="#">TikTok app</a> can track every keystroke made by its users, according to new research that is surfacing as the Chinese-owned video app grapples with U.S. lawmakers' concerns over its data practices.</p> <p>The <a href="#">research</a> from Felix Krause, a privacy researcher and former Google engineer, did not show how TikTok used the capability, which is embedded within the in-app browser that pops up when someone</p>



clicks an outside link. But Mr. Krause said the development was concerning because it showed TikTok had built in functionality to track users' online habits if it chose to do so.

Collecting information on what people type on their phones while visiting outside websites, which can reveal credit card numbers and passwords, is often a feature of malware and other hacking tools. While major technology companies might use such trackers as they test new software, it is not common for them to release a major commercial app with the feature, whether or not it is enabled, researchers said.

"Based on Krause's findings, the way TikTok's custom in-app browser monitors keystrokes is problematic, as the user might enter their sensitive data such as login credentials on external websites," said Jane Manchun Wong, an independent software engineer and security researcher who studies apps for new features.

She said TikTok's in-app browser could "extract information from the user's external browsing sessions, which some users find overreaching."

In a statement, TikTok, which is owned by the Chinese internet firm ByteDance, said Mr. Krause's report was "incorrect and misleading" and that the feature was used for "debugging, troubleshooting and performance monitoring."

"Contrary to the report's claims, we do not collect keystroke or text inputs through this code," TikTok said.

Mr. Krause, 28, said he was unable to ascertain whether keystrokes were actively being tracked, and whether that data was being sent to TikTok.

The research could raise questions [for TikTok in the United States](#), where government officials have scrutinized whether the popular app could [endanger U.S. national security](#) by sharing information about Americans with China. Although debate in Washington about the app had receded under the Biden administration, new concerns [have boiled over](#) in recent months after revelations from [BuzzFeed News](#) and other news outlets about TikTok's data practices and ties to its Chinese parent.

Apps sometimes use in-app browsers to prevent people from visiting malicious sites or to make online browsing easier with the auto-filling of text. But while Facebook and Instagram can use in-app browsers to track data like what sites a person visited, what they highlighted and which buttons they pressed on a website, TikTok goes further by using code that can track each character entered by users, Mr. Krause said.

A spokesman for Meta, the parent company for Facebook and Instagram, declined to comment.

Mr. Krause said he carried out the research on TikTok only on Apple's iOS operating system and noted that the keystroke tracking would only occur within the in-app browser.

As with many apps, TikTok offers few chances for people to click away from its service. Instead of redirecting to mobile web browsers like Safari or Chrome, an in-app browser appears when users click on ads or links embedded within the profiles of other users. These are often the moments people enter key information like credit card details or passwords.

In [a CNN interview](#) in July, Michael Beckerman, a TikTok policy executive, denied that the company logs users' keystrokes but acknowledged monitoring their patterns, such as typing frequency, to safeguard against fraud.

Mr. Krause said he feared those tools had "very similar architectures" and could be repurposed to track keystroke content.

"The problem is they have infrastructure set up to do this stuff," he said.



HEADLINE	<b>08/19 FBI warns on credential stuffing attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/fbi-warns-proxies-and-configurations-used-credential-stuffing-attacks?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.securityweek.com/fbi-warns-proxies-and-configurations-used-credential-stuffing-attacks?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p><b>The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has raised an alarm for cybercriminals using proxies and configurations to hide and automate credential stuffing attacks against companies in the United States.</b></p> <p>Credential stuffing attacks, also called account cracking, involve trying to access online accounts using username and password combinations from existing data leaks or which were purchased on dark web portals.</p> <p>Relying on the fact that users often reuse the same logins for multiple accounts, credential stuffing attacks often lead to significant financial losses caused by fraudulent purchases and system downtime and remediation, but also result in reputational damage.</p> <p>The use of valid credentials allows cybercriminals to access accounts and services across a variety of industries, including media companies, healthcare, retail chains, restaurant groups, and food delivery firms.</p> <p>Once accounts are compromised, the attackers make fraudulent purchases of goods and services, and also attempt to access additional online resources, including financial accounts, the FBI said in <a href="#">an advisory</a> [PDF].</p> <p>Proxies and configurations, the Bureau warns, allow cybercriminals to automate the brute-forcing and exploitation of accounts.</p> <p>“In particular, media companies and restaurant groups are considered lucrative targets for credential stuffing attacks due to the number of customer accounts, the general demand for their services, and the relative lack of importance users place on these types of accounts,” the FBI said.</p> <p>The agency warned that cybercriminals can purchase ‘combo lists’ of usernames and passwords from dedicated forums and websites, along with configurations or ‘configs’, which allow them to customize credential stuffing tools for specific targets.</p> <p>The config may include the website’s address, HTTP request format, how to recognize successful attempts, whether proxies are required, and the like. The FBI also warns that cybercriminals can access video tutorials to learn how credential stuffing can be used to crack accounts.</p> <p>Working with the Australian Federal Police, the FBI said it identified two websites selling more than 300,000 unique sets of credentials to more than over 175,000 registered customers.</p> <p>To bypass defenses, threat actors may employ proxies, including legitimate proxy services, to obfuscate their actual IP addresses. According to the FBI, cybercriminals have extensively used residential proxies to execute credential stuffing attacks, as these are blocked less frequently compared to proxies associated with data centers.</p> <p>“In some instances, actors conduct credential stuffing attacks without the use of proxies, requiring less time and financial resources to execute. Some cracking tools, including one of the most popular automated attack tools, allow actors to run the software without proxies,” the FBI added.</p> <p>In some observed attacks, a company’s mobile applications are also targeted, as they often have weaker security protocols and may permit a higher rate of login attempts. Using packet capture software, the attackers learn about the authentication mechanism employed by the target, and then create custom configurations for credential stuffing activities.</p>

To mitigate such attacks, the FBI recommends that organizations enable multi-factor authentication (MFA), educate users on good password hygiene, use fingerprinting to detect unusual activity, implement shadow banning (limiting user access), use strong security protocols in mobile applications, check online for configurations tailored for their websites and for compromised user credentials, and employ cloud protection services.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 'Grandoreiro' targets Spain, Mexico firms</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/grandoreiro-banking-malware-targets-manufacturers-in-spain-mexico/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/grandoreiro-banking-malware-targets-manufacturers-in-spain-mexico/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>The notorious 'Grandoreiro' banking trojan was spotted in recent attacks targeting employees of a chemicals manufacturer in Spain and workers of automotive and machinery makers in Mexico.</p> <p>The malware has been active in the wild since <a href="#">at least 2017</a> and remains one of the most significant threats of its kind for Spanish-speaking users.</p> <p>The recent campaign, spotted by analysts at <a href="#">Zscaler</a>, started in June 2022 and is still ongoing. It involves the deployment of a Grandoreiro malware variant featuring several new features to evade detection and anti-analysis, as well as a revamped C2 system.</p> <p><b>Starts with an email</b></p> <p>The infection chain begins with an email pretending to originate from the Attorney General's Office of Mexico City or the Spanish Public Ministry, depending on the target.</p> <p>The email contains a link redirecting victims to a website that drops a ZIP archive. That file encloses the Grandoreiro loader module masqueraded as a PDF file to trick the victim into launching it.</p> <p>Once this happens, a Delphi payload is fetched from a remote HTTP file server ("http://15[.]188[.]63[.]127:36992/zxeTYhO.xml") in the form of a compressed 9.2MB ZIP and is extracted and executed by the loader.</p> <p>During that stage, the loader gathers system information, retrieves a list of installed AV programs, cryptocurrency wallets, and e-banking apps, and sends them to the C2.</p> <p>The final payload, signed with a certificate stolen from ASUSSTEK, assumes an inflated size of 400MB through the method of "binary padding" to evade sandbox analysis.</p> <p>In one case highlighted by security analyst Ankit Anubhav on <a href="#">Twitter</a>, Grandoreiro even asks the victim to solve a CAPTCHA to run on the system, which is another attempt to evade analysis.</p> <p>Finally, persistence between reboots is maintained by adding two new Registry keys, setting Grandoreiro to launch at system startup.</p> <p><b>Grandoreiro features</b></p> <p>One of the new additions in the latest Grandoreiro variant sampled by Zscaler is the use of DGA (domain generation algorithm) for C2 communications, which makes mapping the malware's infrastructure and taking it down challenging.</p> <p>The C2 communication pattern is now identical to that of LatentBot, using "ACTION+HELLO" beacons and ID-based cookie value responses.</p> <p>Portuguese cybersecurity blogger Pedro Taveres first spotted the commonalities between the two malware strains <a href="#">in 2020</a>, but the assimilation of the C2 communication techniques into Grandoreiro's code was completed only recently.</p>

	<p>The backdoor capabilities of the malware on the host include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keylogging</li> <li>• Auto-Update for newer versions and modules</li> <li>• Web-Injects and restricting access to specific websites</li> <li>• Command execution</li> <li>• Manipulating windows</li> <li>• Guiding the victim's browser to a specific URL</li> <li>• C2 Domain Generation via DGA (Domain Generation Algorithm)</li> <li>• Imitating mouse and keyboard movements</li> </ul> <p><b>Outlook</b></p> <p>The recent campaign indicates that Grandoreiro's operators are interested in conducting highly-targeted attacks instead of sending large volumes of spam emails to random recipients.</p> <p>Also, the continual evolution of the malware giving it stronger anti-analysis and detection avoidance features, lays the ground for stealthier operations.</p> <p>While Zscaler's report doesn't dive deep into the specific goals of the current campaign, Grandoreiro's operators have historically demonstrated financial motives, so it's assumed the case remains the same.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Crypto hackers already stole \$2B this year</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnbc.com/2022/08/19/crypto-hackers-stole-billions-why-its-a-growing-problem.html?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.cnbc.com/2022/08/19/crypto-hackers-stole-billions-why-its-a-growing-problem.html?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Hackers have already stolen nearly \$2 billion worth of cryptocurrency in 2022 — and the year is only half over.</p> <p>As of July, \$1.9 billion in crypto has been stolen by cybercriminal hacks, according to <a href="#">Chainalysis' "Mid-year Crypto Crime Update."</a></p> <p>At this point last year, hackers had stolen \$1.2 billion, according to the report. That's a spike of nearly 60% compared to a year ago.</p> <p>"Despite the misconception that cryptocurrency is anonymous, it remains easier to run away with coins or tokens," says Max Krupyshev, co-founder and leader of crypto payment ecosystem CoinsPaid. "I don't think that crypto hackers are stronger than the 'usual' kinds, it's just that crypto platforms are new and hold valuable assets."</p> <p>Bad actors are increasingly targeting decentralized finance (DeFi) protocols, which are uniquely vulnerable to hacking, according to the report. DeFi programs are the underlying blockchain technology that enable financial transactions to occur outside of traditional banks. These programs primarily utilize the Ethereum blockchain.</p> <p>DeFi programs are public and use open-source code, which can be helpful because it typically allows for security issues to be discovered and fixed quickly.</p> <p>However, since open-source code is available for anyone to review, cybercriminals are able to extensively study the code and find vulnerabilities that can be exploited and used to steal crypto funds, according to the report.</p> <p>And hackers aren't likely to stop any time soon. They have already stolen \$190 million from crypto startup Nomad and \$5 million from several Solana digital wallets during the first week of August, Chainalysis reports.</p>

	<p>“The only way to stop them is for the industry to shore up security and educate consumers on how to find safe projects to invest in,” the report advises.</p> <p>There are plenty of <a href="#">virtual wallets</a> that can safely store your crypto and secure it against online attacks, too, says Krupyshev. However, it’s important to do thorough research first to determine which <a href="#">type of wallet</a> makes sense for you.</p> <p>It’s also crucial to do your own research before investing in anything in order to avoid potential scams. There are “fake opportunities and Ponzi [schemes] shining with their neon lights all over the place,” Krupyshev warns. “No secure wallet can save a young investor from them.”</p> <p>Additionally, law enforcement must continue to develop its ability to seize stolen cryptocurrency so that hacks are no longer attractive to cybercriminals, Chainalysis reports.</p> <p>Although many investors are drawn to the unregulated nature of cryptocurrency, the lack of a central regulating authority means investors typically don’t have the same protections offered by traditional financial institutions like banks.</p> <p>And remember, crypto assets can be highly volatile and subject to wild price valuations. There’s no guarantee of making a return on your investment, which is why experts recommend only investing as much as you’re prepared to potentially lose.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 AARP fraud alert: new twist on old scam</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/consumer/fraud-alert-a-new-twist-on-an-old-scam-and-victims-are-losing-thousands-of-dollars">https://komonews.com/news/consumer/fraud-alert-a-new-twist-on-an-old-scam-and-victims-are-losing-thousands-of-dollars</a>
GIST	<p>Con artists are using social media to breathe new life into the old government grant scam. Victims who’ve contacted <a href="#">the AARP Fraud Watch Network</a> report losing thousands of dollars.</p> <p>Government grant scams have been around for years. But Amy Nofziger at the Fraud Watch Network says this version is different, because it starts with a message from a friend.</p> <p>“A lot of the victims are saying that they’ve gotten a Facebook Messenger message from one of their Facebook friends saying that they qualified for a government grant, and they saw your name on the list. So just click this link and you can be eligible for this grant,” Nofziger said.</p> <p>Victims who click on the link and fall for the scam, don’t realize that message from their friend was from a scammer who hacked their friend’s social media account.</p> <p>“The scammer will take over someone’s Facebook page and pretend to be that person, so when the victim gets this message, it appears to come from their friend, when in fact it’s really from the criminal,” Nofziger explained. “And that’s why the victim clicks on the link, because they actually think it’s coming from someone they know and trust.”</p> <p>More Info:  <a href="#">AARP</a> and the <a href="#">FTC</a> have more information on government grant scams.</p> <p><a href="#">Government Imposter Scams on the Rise</a></p> <p>If you get a call, text, email, or social media message and don’t know what to do, call the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline at 877-908-3360 before you provide an unknown caller with information or money. You do not need to be an AARP member to use this free service.</p>
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## Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	08/20 USAF target of 'propaganda attack'
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-air-force-targeted-propaganda-attack-kuwait-88633967">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-air-force-targeted-propaganda-attack-kuwait-88633967</a>
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- The U.S. Air Force said Saturday it was the subject of a "propaganda attack" by a previously unheard-of <a href="#">Iraqi</a> militant group that falsely claimed it had launched a drone attack targeting American troops at an air base in Kuwait.</p> <p>The statement by the Air Force's 386th Air Expeditionary Wing came hours after the group calling itself Al-Waretheen, or "The Inheritors," put out an online statement claiming that on Aug. 12, it targeted Kuwait's Ali Al Salem Air Base. The statement included a video showing a drone being launched from a stand, but offered no evidence of an attack or any damage done at the base.</p> <p>The statement claimed the alleged attack aimed to avenge the U.S. drone strike that killed a prominent Iranian Revolution Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in January 2020.</p> <p>The air base is located a few dozen kilometers (miles) from the Iraqi border.</p> <p>"The misinformation falsely stated an Iranian militia group used (drones) to carry out an attack on base," the Air Force statement to The Associated Press said. "No such attack occurred."</p> <p>The statement suggests the U.S. believes that Al-Waretheen is likely an Iranian group, though it described itself as Iraqi.</p> <p>The Air Force added that the online claim "only aims to deceive their audience in believing a lie" and that the Air Force and Kuwait "continue to project air power throughout the region without disruption."</p> <p>Kuwait, a small, oil-rich nation bordering Iraq and <a href="#">Saudi Arabia</a> also near Iran, is considered a major non-NATO ally of the United States. Kuwait and the U.S. have had a close military partnership since America launched the 1991 Gulf War to expel Iraqi troops after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded the country.</p> <p>Some 13,500 American troops are stationed in Kuwait, which also hosts U.S. Army Central's forward headquarters. Those forces have supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and later operations against the Islamic State group.</p> <p>Kuwait did not immediately acknowledge the claimed attack. Its Information Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday night.</p> <p>Kuwait's Al-Qabas newspaper, quoting anonymous "responsible" sources, called the claims about an attack "completely untrue."</p> <p>Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP since Aug. 12 show no apparent damage at the base.</p> <p>A series of militant groups that analysts believe have ties back to Iran have claimed attacks they say targeted U.S. troops in Iraq over recent years. However, those roadside bombings targeted Iraqi contractors supplying American forces in the country.</p> <p>The claim also comes as what have been described as the final round of negotiations continue between Iran and the U.S. over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/22 Pakistan police terror charge against ex-PM
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-file-terrorism-charge-pakistans-imran-khan-88678549">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-file-terrorism-charge-pakistans-imran-khan-88678549</a>

ISLAMABAD -- Pakistani police have filed terrorism charges against former Prime Minister Imran Khan, authorities said Monday, escalating political tensions in the country as the ousted premier holds mass rallies seeking to return to office.

The terrorism charges come over a speech Khan gave in Islamabad on Saturday in which he vowed to sue police officers and a female judge and alleged that a close aide had been tortured after his arrest.

Khan himself appeared to still be free and had not immediately addressed the police charge sheet being lodged against him. Khan's political party — Tehreek-e-Insaf, now in the opposition — published online videos showing supporters surrounding his home to potentially stop police from reaching it.

Hundreds remained there early Monday. Tehreek-e-Insaf warned that it will hold nationwide rallies if Khan is arrested.

Under Pakistan's legal system, police file what is known as a first information report about charges against an accused person to a magistrate judge, who allows the investigation to move forward. Typically, police then arrest and question the accused.

The report against Khan includes testimony from Magistrate Judge Ali Javed, who described being at the Islamabad rally on Saturday and hearing Khan criticize the inspector-general of Pakistan's police and another judge. Khan went on to reportedly say: "You also get ready for it, we will also take action against you. All of you must be ashamed."

Khan could face several years in prison from the new charges, which accuse him of threatening police officers and the judge. However, he's not been detained on other lesser charges levied against him in his recent campaigning against the government.

The Pakistani judiciary also has a history of politicization and taking sides in power struggles between the military, the civilian government and opposition politicians, according to the Washington-based advocacy group Freedom House.

Khan came to power in 2018, promising to break the pattern of family rule in Pakistan. His opponents contend he was elected with help from the powerful military, which has ruled the country for half of its 75-year history.

In seeking Khan's ouster earlier this year, the opposition had accused him of economic mismanagement as inflation soars and the Pakistani rupee plummets in value. The parliament's no-confidence vote in April that ousted Khan capped months of political turmoil and a constitutional crisis that required the Supreme Court to step in. Meanwhile, it appeared the military similarly had cooled to Khan.

Khan alleged without providing evidence that the Pakistani military took part in a U.S. plot to oust him. Washington, the Pakistani military and the government of Khan's successor, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, have all denied that. Meanwhile, Khan has been carrying out a series of mass rallies trying to pressure Sharif's government.

In his latest speech Sunday night at a rally in the city of Rawalpindi outside of Islamabad, Khan said so-called "neutrals" were behind the recent crackdown against his party. He has in the past used the phrase "neutrals" for the military.

On Sunday, the internet-access advocacy group NetBlocks said internet services in the country blocked access to YouTube after Khan broadcast a live speech on the platform despite a ban issued by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority.

Police arrested Khan's political aide, Shahbaz Gill, earlier this month after he appeared on the private television channel ARY TV and urged soldiers and officers to refuse to obey "illegal orders" from the

	<p>military leadership. Gill was charged with treason, which under Pakistani law carries the death penalty. ARY also remains off-air in Pakistan following that broadcast.</p> <p>Khan has alleged that police abused Gill while in custody. Police say Gill suffers from asthma and has not been abused while detained. Khan's speech Saturday in Islamabad focused primarily on Gill's arrest.</p> <p>Meanwhile, police separately arrested journalist Jameel Farooqi in Karachi over his allegations that Gill had been tortured by police. Farooqi is a vocal supporter of Khan.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Somali forces end militants' hotel siege</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/19/casualties-reported-as-jihadist-group-seizes-hotel-in-somali-capital">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/19/casualties-reported-as-jihadist-group-seizes-hotel-in-somali-capital</a>
GIST	<p>Somali forces have ended the siege at a hotel in the capital Mogadishu after it was overrun by Islamic extremist gunmen in one of the most deadly and high-profile attacks in recent years.</p> <p>According to police and witnesses, at least 20 people are believed to have been killed and 40 wounded during the attack, which has been claimed by the al-Qaida-linked group al-Shabaab.</p> <p>Detonations sent huge plumes of smoke over Mogadishu, and gunfire reverberated around the city. Large sections of the Hayat hotel were destroyed by the fighting, witnesses said.</p> <p>It took around 30 hours before it was reported that the authorities had retaken the hotel at around midnight, local time, on Saturday. "The security forces have ended the siege now and the gunmen are dead, we've had no incoming gunfire from the building in the past hour," a security commander, speaking anonymously, told Agence France-Presse.</p> <p>The official gave no information about the total number of casualties, or how many al-Shabaab fighters had been killed, adding that the government would give a press briefing on Sunday morning.</p> <p>The attack is the biggest since Somalia's new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was elected in May after many months of political instability. It comes after an increase in military operations against al-Shabaab and amid a severe humanitarian crisis, which threatens millions with famine.</p> <p>Al-Shabaab has been waging a deadly insurgency against Somalia's fragile central government for about 15 years and has become one of al-Qaida's most effective affiliates since swearing allegiance to its then leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2011. Al-Zawahiri was killed by a US drone strike in Kabul earlier this month.</p> <p>President Biden ordered US special forces back into the unstable east African country earlier this year, reversing a decision by his predecessor. Somali troops have gone on the offensive in recent weeks but have made limited gains.</p> <p>In a brief statement on a pro-Shabaab website, the group claimed that their attackers had "forcibly entered Hotel Hayat in Mogadishu" and were "carrying out random shooting inside the hotel".</p> <p>Al-Shabaab has targeted hotels for many years. Some establishments are attacked as symbols of practices seen as unIslamic or simply because they are vulnerable. Others fail to pay off the group, which raises millions of dollars through "taxes" on businesses across Somalia.</p> <p>Dozens of people had gathered outside the Hayat hotel, a popular spot frequented by government officials and ordinary Somalis, hoping to discover the fate of loved ones caught up inside.</p> <p>Police spokesperson Abdifatah Adan Hassan had told reporters late on Friday that the initial blast was caused by a suicide bomber who attacked with at least three gunmen.</p>



Witnesses said a second blast occurred just a few minutes later, inflicting casualties on rescuers and members of the security forces and civilians who rushed to the scene after the first explosion.

“We have been looking for a relative of mine who was trapped inside the hotel, she was confirmed dead together with six other people – two of them I know,” witness Muudey Ali said.

Earlier this week, the US announced that its forces had killed 13 al-Shabaab fighters in an airstrike as the Islamist militants were attacking Somali forces.

The strike took place near Teedaan, in Hiraaan province, in support of Somali troops fighting militants.

Mohamud said last month that ending al-Shabaab’s insurgency required more than a military approach but that his government would negotiate with the group only when the time was right.

Al-Shabaab fighters were driven out of Mogadishu in 2011 by an African Union force, but the group still controls much of the countryside where it can operate with relative impunity.

The ongoing conflict has disrupted relief efforts. More than 755,000 people have been internally displaced in Somalia because of the severe drought this year, bringing the total figure to 1 million people since January 2021 when the drought began, according to displacement figures released by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Aid officials say large numbers of Somalis have been trying to flee al-Shabaab-run zones to reach the relative safety of displacement centres on the outskirts of major towns, suggesting that the group has been unable to provide relief from the drought or unwilling to allow NGOs to work freely.

The Horn of Africa nation has been mired in chaos since the fall of the military regime of president Siad Barre in 1991. His ousting was followed by a civil war and the ascendancy of a series of Islamist movements. Al-Shabaab began as more radical breakaway faction of a wider movement but has gone on to become one of the most tenacious extremist organisations in the world.

The deadliest attack in Somalia occurred in October 2017 when a truck packed with explosives blew up in a bustling commercial district of Mogadishu, killing 512 people.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Militants storm hotel in Somalia; 20 dead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/africa-explosions-somalia-mogadishu-al-shabab-973890d612dd85ab816329dc189769b8">https://apnews.com/article/africa-explosions-somalia-mogadishu-al-shabab-973890d612dd85ab816329dc189769b8</a>
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — Islamic militants have stormed a hotel in Somalia’s capital, engaging in an hours-long exchange of fire with the security forces that left at least 20 people dead, according to police and witnesses.</p> <p>In addition, at least 40 people were wounded in the late Friday night attack and security forces rescued many others, including children, from the scene at Mogadishu’s popular Hayat Hotel, they said Saturday.</p> <p>The attack started with explosions outside the hotel before the gunmen entered the building.</p> <p>Somali forces were still trying to end the siege of the hotel almost 24 hours after the attack started. Gunfire could still be heard Saturday evening as security forces tried to contain the last gunmen thought to be holed up on the hotel’s top floor.</p> <p>The Islamic extremist group al-Shabab, which has ties with al-Qaida, claimed responsibility for the attack, the latest of its frequent attempts to strike places visited by government officials. The attack on the hotel is</p>

the first major terror incident in Mogadishu since Somalia's new leader, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, took over in May.

In a Twitter post, the U.S. Embassy in Somalia said it "strongly condemns" the attack on the Hayat.

"We extend condolences to the families of loved ones killed, wish a full recovery to the injured, & pledge continued support for #Somalia to hold murderers accountable & build when others destroy," it said.

There was no immediate word on the identities of the victims, but many are believed to be civilians.

Mohamed Abdirahman, director of Mogadishu's Madina Hospital, told the AP that 40 people were admitted there with wounds or injuries from the attack. While nine were sent home after getting treatment, five are in critical condition in the ICU, he said.

"We were having tea near the hotel lobby when we heard the first blast, followed by gunfire. I immediately rushed toward hotel rooms on the ground floor and I locked the door," witness Abdullahi Hussein said by phone. "The militants went straight upstairs and started shooting. I was inside the room until the security forces arrived and rescued me."

He said on his way to safety he saw "several bodies lying on the ground outside hotel reception."

Al-Shabab remains the most lethal Islamic extremist group in Africa.

The group has seized even more territory in recent years, taking advantage of rifts among Somali security personnel as well as disagreements between the government seat in Mogadishu and regional states. It remains the biggest threat to political stability in the volatile Horn of Africa nation.

Forced to retreat from Mogadishu in 2011, al-Shabab is slowly making a comeback from the rural areas to which it retreated, defying the presence of African Union peacekeepers as well as U.S. drone strikes targeting its fighters.

The militants in early May attacked a military base for AU peacekeepers outside Mogadishu, killing many Burundian troops. The attack came just days before the presidential vote that returned Mohamud to power five years after he had been voted out.

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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 IS Beatles militant sentenced to 8 life terms</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/us/politics/islamic-state-beatles-killings-elsheikh.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/us/politics/islamic-state-beatles-killings-elsheikh.html</a>
GIST	<p>ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A key member of an Islamic State cell known as the Beatles was sentenced to life in prison on Friday for his role in the abduction, abuse and deaths of four Americans in Syria, ending a long and wrenching effort by their families to bring him to justice.</p> <p>In April, a jury found El Shafee Elsheikh, 34, guilty on four counts of hostage-taking and four counts of conspiracy after a two-week trial. Former captives detailed relentless beatings, sexual abuse, waterboarding and killings by three young Britons, who were nicknamed the Beatles for their accents and their incessant banter.</p> <p>The relatives of the four Americans — the journalists James Foley and Steven J. Sotloff as well as the aid workers Kayla Mueller and Peter Kassig — watched intently, at times linking arms, as Judge Thomas S. Ellis III of Federal District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia sentenced Mr. Elsheikh to eight concurrent life terms without parole.</p> <p>"It is a hollow victory," said Diane Foley, Mr. Foley's mother, who noted the sentence was handed down on the eighth anniversary of her son's beheading. "Our families have lost our loved ones forever."</p>

Judge Ellis, commenting on the declining interest in the case over the years, urged reporters covering the hearing, and the country at large, “to not forget what happened here.”

Mr. Elsheikh, who remained polite, relaxed and largely impassive in his court appearances, already knew he would be confined to a life behind bars before the sentencing on Friday. He was slated to serve five life terms under mandatory federal guidelines, but lawyers for the Justice Department had requested a heavier punishment.

Yet on Friday, Mr. Elsheikh seemed more fidgety than usual, apparently discomfited by the stiff, green prison jumpsuit he was wearing; he scratched, at times frenetically, under his collar as he listened to family members and one freed hostage, detail his actions.

“It was stressful,” Carl Mueller, the father of Ms. Mueller, said of sitting only a few yards away from Mr. Elsheikh. “I’ve spent so much time staring at the back of his head. But it’s worth it, knowing he’s getting what he deserved.”

Prosecutors viewed every additional year added to his sentence, however symbolic, as vital, given the brutality of the crimes and the desire to send a message to would-be militants. In a graphic 22-page sentencing memo presented to the court, a lead prosecutor in the case, Raj Parekh, argued for the maximum penalty allowed by law, citing the cell’s involvement in many other offenses committed during the Islamic State’s rampage through Syria in 2012 and 2013.

Mr. Parekh, the first assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, made that case in court, too, reciting a litany of the horrors visited on the captives — including one instance in which members of the Beatles forced two men to beat each other senseless while they performed a mocking play-by-play.

He conceded that his description, however vivid, did not capture the depth of the captives’ suffering, and concluded with a reference to Dante’s *Inferno*: “We lack the vocabulary of such pain.”

Mr. Elsheikh, for his part, declined the judge’s offer to speak up in his own defense on Friday.

“I wasn’t surprised,” said Mr. Mueller, after the three-hour hearing ended. “He’s been cold, with no remorse, because I think he still believes he was doing the right thing.”

Mr. Elsheikh immediately appealed the decision. But Judge Ellis quickly rejected that effort, meaning Mr. Elsheikh could be sent to a high-security prison in Florence, Colo.

The families of the victims have worked for years to secure a conviction, pressuring the Justice Department to bring Mr. Elsheikh and an associate, Alexandra Kotey, to justice on American soil. In August 2020, William P. Barr, then the attorney general, agreed to waive the death penalty against the men in exchange for cooperation from British prosecutors.

The families unsuccessfully pressed the Obama administration to negotiate with the Islamic State and pay ransoms for the release of the captives, as other countries did.

Mr. Elsheikh never denied fighting for the Islamic State, but his court-appointed defense lawyers have contended that he was not a member of the Beatles. His supposed involvement in the kidnappings was a result of mistaken identity given that the captors often wore black balaclavas to conceal their identities, they said.

He has not been directly implicated in the killings, but his participation in — and knowledge about — numerous kidnapping, ransom and murder plots was enough to secure a conviction under the law, prosecutors argued.

For years, American investigators suspected that there were a total of four Beatles who participated in the kidnapping and ransom scheme: Mr. Kotey, Mr. Elsheikh, Mohammed Emwazi, also known as Jihadi John, and Aine Davis.

But earlier this year, an F.B.I. agent testified during Mr. Elsheikh's trial that there were only three main members of the group, casting doubt on Mr. Davis's involvement in the ransom, torture and killing of the hostages. In 2017, a Turkish court convicted Mr. Davis, who was born in London, of being a member of the Islamic State. He was recently released from a Turkish prison and is likely to be deported back to Britain, where he could face terrorism charges.

Prosecutors in Northern Virginia have secured a handful of high-profile convictions in Islamic State-related cases, including that of Mr. Elsheikh and Mr. Kotey; Mohammed Khalifa, a Saudi-born Canadian, who was part of the Islamic State's Ministry of Media, which was responsible for publicizing the beheading of Mr. Foley; and Allison Fluke-Ekren, an American woman from Kansas, who commanded a battalion of female fighters for the Islamic State.

Mr. Elsheikh, Mr. Kotey and Mr. Khalifa were sentenced to life in prison. Ms. Fluke-Ekren awaits sentencing after pleading guilty in June to a terrorism charge.

The British extremists repeatedly beat the hostages they kept imprisoned in Raqqa, Syria, which the Islamic State claimed as its capital at the time, according to prosecutors. They subjected their prisoners to abuses such as waterboarding, mock executions, painful stress positions, food deprivation, chokeholds that caused blackouts, electric shocks and beatings that lasted 20 minutes or longer.

They also forced the prisoners to witness killings, court papers said.

One of the hostages was Daniel Rye Ottosen, a photographer from Denmark who grew so close to Mr. Foley that he spent weeks memorizing his friend's farewell letter before being released in June 2014.

On Friday, Mr. Ottosen nervously adjusted the microphone, standing next to the empty jury box in Judge Ellis's courtroom, one of four witnesses the government called to make the case for a maximum sentence.

Mr. Ottosen, speaking softly as Mr. Elsheikh strained to hear, said that the worst part of his 13 months in captivity was the terrible sense of the unknown, and the long interludes of waiting when he was forced to live with the oppressive silence.

"It was better when they beat us — I could concentrate on my pain — and that's easier than being with your thoughts," said Mr. Ottosen, who said that painful pattern had resurfaced in his normal life.

"I don't think it's the actual horror that troubles us the most," he added. "It's always the silence."

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	08/21 Alaska snow crabs disappeared
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/08/21/alaska-crab-climate/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/08/21/alaska-crab-climate/</a>
GIST	<p>The theories are many. The crabs moved into Russian waters. They are dead because predators got them. They are dead because they ate each other. The crabs scuttled off the continental shelf and scientists just didn't see them. Alien abduction.</p> <p>Okay, not that last one. But everyone agrees on one point: The disappearance of Alaska's snow crabs probably is connected to climate change. Marine biologists and those in the fishing industry fear the precipitous and unexpected crash of this luxury seafood item is a harbinger, a warning about how quickly a fishery can be wiped out in this new, volatile world.</p>

Gabriel Prout and his brothers Sterling and Ashlan were blindsided. Harvests of Alaskan king crab — the bigger, craggier species that was the star of the television show “Deadliest Catch” — have been on a slow decline for over a decade. But in 2018 and 2019, scientists had seemingly great news about Alaska’s snow crabs: Record numbers of juvenile crabs were zooming around the ocean bottom, suggesting a massive haul for subsequent fishing seasons.

Prout, 32, and his brothers bought out their father’s partner, becoming part owners of the 116-foot Silver Spray. They took out loans and bought \$4 million in rights to harvest a huge number of crabs. It was a year that many young commercial fishers in the Bering Sea bought into the fishery, going from deckhands to owners. Everyone was convinced the 2021 snow crab season was going to be huge.

And then they weren’t there.

Scientists, despite earlier optimistic signs, found that snow crab stocks were down 90 percent. The season opened and the total allowable harvest went from 45 million pounds to 5.5 million pounds. Commercial fishers couldn’t even catch that quantity.

In October 2021, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game closed the king crab season entirely to harvesting, for the first time since the 1990s.

“It was a struggle,” Prout said. “We were pulling up close to blank pots. We’d be searching several miles of ocean floor and not even pulling up 100 crabs. We were grinding away and barely caught what we were allowed to catch.”

King crabs are massive, up to 20 pounds each, with thick, spiky shells that diners need tools to crack. Snow crabs are between 2 and 4 pounds and have thinner shells that can be cracked with your hands. Snow crabs are the biggest crab industry in Alaska and, while still a splurge (in a normal year around \$25 per pound), they tend to be much less expensive than kings. Both have sweet, briny white meat that pulls out in long pieces.

Go to Joe’s Stone Crab in D.C. for an order of those sweet, luxurious crab legs and you’re likely to have palpitations: \$199.95 for 1½ pounds of king crab. King crab is served chilled with drawn butter and is cracked tableside. But still, that price tag is startling.

For restaurateurs seeking new sources to make up for Alaska’s shortfall, there’s an additional headache: The U.S. government in March banned imports of Russian fish and seafood products, along with other consumer items such as vodka and diamonds, as part of its expanding sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

At Klaw, a hot new restaurant in Miami, managing partner George Atterbury has worked with Troika Seafood, a Norwegian seafood wholesaler, to bring in live red king crab from Finnmark County, Norway’s northernmost county. They are flown overnight via Norse Atlantic Airways into Fort Lauderdale. Each of the prehistoric-looking animals, which can have a five-foot leg span, is tracked with a QR code.

“We house the live king crab in a separate facility within our restaurant in 2,000-gallon tanks,” Atterbury said. “The costs fluctuate aggressively, but we understand that we can only pass a small percentage to the customer as we are price-sensitive on what is reasonable.”

The collapse of two of three major crab stocks in Alaska — there’s a third, bairdi crab, also called tanner crab, which is doing fine, but is a much smaller industry — is more than a gastronomic inconvenience for the one-percenters. It is the main source of income for many of the 65 communities that make up the Western Alaska Community Development Quota Program, which allocates a portion of the annual fish harvest of certain commercial species directly to coalitions of villages that, because of geographic isolation and diminished access to sources of income, have had limited economic opportunities, says Heather McCarty, a fisheries consultant in Juneau.

The program was established to provide economic and social benefits for residents of western Alaska, alleviating poverty in what often are Indigenous communities.

"I work in the Pribilof Islands for an Aleut community of 450 people, which is heavily invested in the crab quota," McCarty said. On the island of St. Paul, Trident Seafoods has one of the largest crab processing plants in the world, employing as many as 400 workers during peak snow crab season in February. This February, it was quiet.

"The whole community of St. Paul is run on the fish tax. It's 85 percent of the revenue of the community," she said. "They had some [financial] reserves last year, but it's not going to go well in the future. King crab has been declining for a while, but snow crab had been quite successful and took a nosedive that nobody expected."

She says what happened with snow crabs is an example of the kind of rapid changes in resource availability that climate change is making commonplace beneath the sea. In some cases, the abrupt changes are apparent when species flourish. "There's been a record return of sockeye salmon in Bristol Bay," she said. "It does seem that these rapid changes can have extreme consequences."

But what happened to those snow crabs?

"We don't have data to specifically say what happened," said the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Bob Foy, the science and research director of the agency's Alaska Fisheries Science Center. "What we know is that we had extreme heat wave in 2019, and we had numerous fish and crab stocks moving into areas they hadn't been historically. The fishery moved its effort toward the northwest."

But movement alone doesn't explain it. Crabs are a benthic species, meaning they crawl around on the ocean bottom and are not able to migrate as quickly as many finfish.

"The biomass of crabs up there at St. Lawrence Island [northwest of mainland Alaska in the Bering Sea] didn't change much. What that suggests is there was a large mortality event or they moved into deeper water beyond our survey or into the Russian shelf," Foy said, but he sounds skeptical about that last possibility. "The magnitude of biomass could not all have moved without us detecting it. We believe we had a very large mortality event, which points to an extreme event that we have never seen before in the Bering Sea."

He said the crabs, perhaps because of heightened sensitivity to their ecosystem, are like the canary in a coal mine — for the climate and those who make their living from crabbing.

Crabbers are waiting to hear whether the state's \$200 million snow crab industry will be severely curtailed for the 2022-2023 season, and on Oct. 15, they find out if the king crab season is closed entirely for a second year.

Jamie Goen, the executive director of the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers trade association, said the crab collapse is affecting blue collar workers and small family businesses the most. For commercial fishers, nothing like farmers' "crop insurance" is available, and although the U.S. Department of Commerce is directing nearly \$132 million to Alaska for fishery disasters, it will take years for money to reach those affected, Goen said. And if reports of crab deaths are greatly exaggerated and the crustaceans have instead permanently migrated northward to colder waters, fishing farther north in the Bering Sea is too dangerous for Alaskan owner-operator vessels, in part because there are no Coast Guard services there to respond to medical emergencies or boat trouble.

The Prout family is diversifying by "tendering" cod and herring, essentially acting as a courier to transport caught fish to the canneries so the commercial fishers can keep fishing. They're hauling other people's catch to work off that \$4 million loan.

	<p>“To recoup a 90 percent loss, there aren’t a lot of options,” Gabriel Prout said via satellite phone from aboard the Silver Spray, en route from Cordova to Kodiak to tender cod. “It’s a bleak time for the industry. A lot of people will sell their vessels or sell their quota to make ends meet. Dad is handling this remarkably well, but he’s always an optimistic person.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Ethiopia airlines pilots miss landing; asleep</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/world/africa/ethiopian-airlines-sleeping-pilots.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/world/africa/ethiopian-airlines-sleeping-pilots.html</a>
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya — Two pilots with Africa’s largest airline reportedly fell asleep at the controls and missed their window to land while flying into Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa, on Monday, according to an aviation news site.</p> <p>The Ethiopian Airlines pilots were operating a Boeing 737-800 from Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, when they reportedly fell asleep at 37,000 feet and were unable to be reached by air traffic control, according to a <a href="#">report by The Aviation Herald</a>.</p> <p>According to the site, the pilots were woken by an onboard alarm that began blaring when the plane passed the point of descent and the autopilot disconnected.</p> <p>After nearly 30 minutes, the “disconnect wailer woke the crew up, who then maneuvered the aircraft for a safe landing on runway,” according to The Aviation Herald.</p> <p>Ethiopian Airlines would not confirm that the pilots fell asleep, but in a statement, the company said the crew members involved had been suspended pending an investigation. “Appropriate corrective action will be taken based on the outcome of the investigation,” the airline said.</p> <p>Ethiopian Airlines is Africa’s <a href="#">leading carrier</a>, with an operating fleet of 138 planes that fly to almost 130 destinations in Africa and around the world. Besides carrying over 9.6 million passengers in 2020, the state-owned carrier also operates cargo services, <a href="#">runs its own aviation school</a> and code-shares with airlines across Africa, Europe and Asia. The airline’s revenue was up to \$3.7 billion in the 2019-20 fiscal year, according to <a href="#">figures published on its website</a>.</p> <p>Monday’s passenger flight was flying from Khartoum to Addis Ababa, a route that takes about two hours. It was not immediately clear how many passengers were on board, but the Boeing 737-800 has a capacity of up to 189 passengers depending on the layout. The 737-800 is an older model, which Boeing has since tried to replace with the 737 Max 8, the model involved in the 2019 <a href="#">Ethiopian Airlines crash</a> that killed 157 people.</p> <p>Alex Macheras, an aviation expert, commenting on Monday’s incident, said that pilot fatigue remained widespread and was a major danger in air travel.</p> <p>“A timely reminder that pilot fatigue is widespread, an issue across the airline spectrum, sometimes systematic, and poses a major threat to air safety,” Mr. Macheras said <a href="#">on Twitter</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Gorge mass shooting plot disrupted?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/deputies-arrest-armed-man-gorge-ampitheater-believe-mass-shooting-prevented/281-6a560148-df8e-4444-a2ba-f0e534534f40">https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/deputies-arrest-armed-man-gorge-ampitheater-believe-mass-shooting-prevented/281-6a560148-df8e-4444-a2ba-f0e534534f40</a>
GIST	<p>GEORGE, Wash. — Grant County Sheriff’s Deputies arrested a man Friday night at the Gorge Amphitheater that they believe “may have had plans” to commit a mass shooting.</p> <p>Authorities were notified by security and citizens around 9 p.m. that a man in the parking lot had inhaled an unknown “substance or gas from a balloon” and loaded 2 pistols from the trunk of his car.</p>



	<p>The suspect, a 30-year-old Ephrata man, then approached concertgoers attending the Bass Canyon concert series at the Gorge Amphitheater. According to authorities, the man was asking attendees what time the show was ending and where people would be exiting the venue.</p> <p>The man never made it inside the event, and was detained and disarmed by authorities outside the venue gates. He eventually was arrested on suspicion of one count of possession of a dangerous weapon and one count of unlawful carrying or handling of a weapon. He is being held in the Grant County Jail.</p> <p>No one was injured, and the suspect did not make any statements to deputies upon his arrest.</p>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	08/21 Incident closes KY state fair; 9 arrests
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wlky.com/article/kentucky-state-fair-shots-fired-arrests-teenager-closing-hours-regular/40950307#">https://www.wlky.com/article/kentucky-state-fair-shots-fired-arrests-teenager-closing-hours-regular/40950307#</a>
GIST	<p>Nine people have been arrested in connection with the incident Saturday night that caused the Kentucky State Fair to close early, according to Kentucky State Police.</p> <p>Around 9:20 p.m., KSP said they got a report of a disturbance in front of the Midway area at the state fair.</p> <p>MetroSafe later confirmed that the report was given as shots fired.</p> <p>This caused a soft closure to be initiated in order to clear out the fair.</p> <p>Police say that their initial investigation indicates that a group of people caused panic with "noise-making devices", leading fair goers to believe that gunshots had been fired.</p> <p>Police say that, as of now, they have found no evidence indicating that any guns were fired during the incident.</p> <p>They did say the investigation is ongoing, however.</p> <p>KSP arrested eight people, and the fair board's police arrested one person.</p> <p>Of the nine arrested, three were adults and six were minors.</p> <p>They are faced with charges including disorderly conduct, menacing, possession of stolen property and possession of a handgun.</p> <p>The Kentucky State Fair released a statement on Sunday afternoon regarding the incident that took place Saturday night causing the fair to close early.</p> <p>"The Kentucky State Fair is a long-standing tradition of fun and togetherness for many families," reads the statement. "It is unfortunate that a few individuals and poor decisions disrupted that. While we are not able to provide details on the police investigation, we are thankful no one was injured and appreciate the Kentucky State Police and our Fair Team members who quickly responded to this incident."</p> <p>KSP confirmed that there were no reported injuries stemming from the incident.</p>

	<p>18 year-olds Areon Nobles and Donte Churchill, as well as 33 year-old Derrick Miles, were among the nine arrested.</p> <p>Nobles has been charged with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest and fleeing from police.</p> <p>Churchill has been charged with receiving a stolen firearm, and Miles has been charged with public intoxication and disorderly conduct.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Fatally shot by woman he stopped to help</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/21/us/alabama-park-killing-stranded-motorist.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/21/us/alabama-park-killing-stranded-motorist.html</a>
GIST	<p>A 22-year-old man was fatally shot in a national forest in Alabama last week by a woman pretending to be a stranded driver after the man and his girlfriend pulled over to help, the authorities said.</p> <p>The man, Adam Simjee, and his girlfriend, Mikayla Paulus, both students at the University of Central Florida, were driving in Talladega National Forest, about 80 miles east of Birmingham, on the morning of Aug. 14 when they were flagged down by a woman claiming her car would not start, according to a statement from the Clay County Sheriff's Office <a href="#">posted by television station WBRC</a>.</p> <p>The woman, Yasmine Hider, pulled out a gun and made the couple walk back into the woods, according to the statement. Mr. Simjee then pulled out his own gun, leading to an "exchange of gunfire" in which Ms. Hider was shot several times in the torso and Mr. Simjee was shot in the back, the statement said.</p> <p>Ms. Paulus, 20, who was not injured, tried to revive her boyfriend by administering CPR but he died at the scene, the authorities said.</p> <p>Ms. Hider was transported to a Birmingham hospital where she had surgery for her injuries. The authorities said she may be part of a group of people "living off the grid" in tents in the national forest who were reported to be "armed and potentially violent."</p> <p>The sheriff's office said Ms. Hider faces charges that include one count of murder, two counts of kidnapping and two counts of robbery.</p> <p>Ms. Paulus told the authorities that at the time of the shooting, a second woman, later identified as Krystal Diane Pinkins, 36, had been standing in the woods.</p> <p>Ms. Hider, the assailant, had called out to Ms. Pinkins to help her but she fled, according to officials. It was at this point that Ms. Paulus was able to get her phone and call 911, the statement said.</p> <p>A tracking team from the Alabama Department of Corrections found what the authorities described as a "base camp" about half a mile from the scene of the shooting where they said they found Ms. Pinkins near a group of tents.</p> <p>As officers ordered her to the ground, "a 5-year-old child ran from the woods holding a loaded shotgun," the sheriff's office statement said. The officers instructed the child, later identified as Ms. Pinkins's son, to put down the shotgun but he kept going toward his mother before eventually putting it on the ground, officials said.</p> <p>Ms. Pinkins was charged with one count of murder, two counts of kidnapping, two counts of robbery as well as endangering the welfare of a child. She remains in the Clay County Jail, according to sheriff's records. Her son was taken into state care.</p> <p>On Wednesday, David Law, a Clay County district court judge, <a href="#">ordered those involved in the case</a>, including lawyers, witnesses, law enforcement personnel and "anyone else affiliated" with the case, not to discuss it because it could affect Ms. Pinkins's right to a fair trial.</p>

	<p>Ms. Paulus, Mr. Simjee's girlfriend, cited the order <a href="#">on Facebook</a> on Thursday. She said she and Mr. Simjee's family wanted "an unbiased jury pool so that we can get the justice we deserve for losing the best man in our lives."</p> <p>In <a href="#">another post on Saturday</a>, Ms. Paulus said that the family had laid Mr. Simjee to rest.</p> <p>"I have no doubts I'll see him in the next lifetime. He was my soulmate and will always be," Ms. Paulus wrote. "Rest in peace baby."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/22 Australia police seize largest fentanyl stash</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/22/asia/australia-largest-fentanyl-seizure-intl-hnk/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/22/asia/australia-largest-fentanyl-seizure-intl-hnk/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN) Australian Federal Police say they've seized more than 5 million doses of fentanyl, the largest shipment of the opioid the country has ever seen.</p> <p>Police said the drugs were hidden in an industrial machine, known as a lathe, that arrived at the Port of Melbourne in December 2021 from Canada.</p> <p>But they didn't launch an investigation until February, when Australian Border Force officials found the drug stash, which included 11.2 kilograms of pure fentanyl and 30 kilograms of methamphetamine.</p> <p>Fentanyl is a highly addictive painkiller 50-100 times <a href="#">more potent</a> than morphine.</p> <p>"It is highly unusual to find this drug in Australia outside from its use for medical purposes," AFP acting Commander Anthony Hall said during a <a href="#">press conference</a> Monday. "The seizure of 11 kg is cause for serious concern to the Australian community."</p> <p>Previously, Australian authorities have only detected small shipments -- 30 grams or less -- of fentanyl illegally imported into the country, according to an AFP <a href="#">press release</a>.</p> <p>In Monday's <a href="#">press conference</a>, ABF Commander James Watson emphasized the significance of the bust given the amount of fentanyl discovered.</p> <p>"Typically, we would only see fentanyl being detected in quantities of 1 g or less, so to have a detection that is 11 kg pure, is just quite frankly extraordinary," Watson said. "I'd describe it as a total act of bastardy."</p> <p>While fentanyl is primarily used for medical purposes in Australia, elsewhere it is often mixed with other drugs such as heroin with sometimes deadly consequences. In the United States, the growing prevalence of fentanyl has <a href="#">contributed</a> to an increase in fatal overdoses.</p> <p>When asked why the announcement was made now, months after the drugs were initially seized and identified, Hall said one of the main purposes was "to alert the community to the harms of what fentanyl poses."</p> <p>Authorities also want people who may have information about the source of the fentanyl to come forward. "There is someone out there in the community who does know more so we are appealing to that person or persons who are there to speak up and call crime stoppers please," Hall said.</p> <p>Hall suggested organized crime was to blame for the large shipment of the drug but clarified that no arrests have been made. A joint investigation conducted by the AFP, ABF and Australia's Department of Home Affairs is ongoing.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 BP nab unaccompanied child imposters</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220819-unaccompanied-child-imposters-identified-in-el-paso">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220819-unaccompanied-child-imposters-identified-in-el-paso</a>
GIST	<p>U.S. Border Patrol agents in the El Paso Sector recently identified ten adults posing as unaccompanied minors while in custody.</p> <p>Three adults posing as minors were discovered by agents at the El Paso Sector Central Processing Center (CPC) while attempting to use counterfeit documentation. These individuals were from Guatemala and include a 21-year-old female, a 22-year-old female and a 22-year-old male. The three were part of a group of 13 migrants encountered by agents of El Paso Station on August 16. The three were encountered, along with nine unaccompanied children from Guatemala and one adult. These individuals pose as minors in order to avoid expulsion.</p> <p>On August 17, agents assigned to the CPC discovered three males from Guatemala intentionally posing as minors. The individuals, 26-year-old, 25-year-old, and 18-year-old were part of a group of nine migrants that illegally entered the United States and were encountered by agents from El Paso Station. The individuals were questioned at the CPC after agents detected discrepancies between their story and the documentation they presented to pass as minors.</p> <p>A third significant event occurred when agents assigned to Ysleta Station discovered a group of eight unaccompanied minors from Guatemala crossing the border illegally on August 17. Two individuals from this group, a 22-year-old male and a 19-year-old female were discovered as imposters once they were questioned by agents at the CPC and after detecting discrepancies during their interviews.</p> <p>Individuals who attempt to pose as unaccompanied children may face charges under 18 USC 1001 (False Statements to Federal Agents) and 18 USC 371 (Conspiracy to Defraud the U.S.) among other charges for illegally entering the United States. Penalties can include fines and imprisonment. Investigative efforts by El Paso Sector Border Patrol agents have resulted in the detection of more than 665 adult migrants posing as minors during FY2022.</p> <p>“Transnational Criminal Organizations exploit migrants convincing them to pose as minors in order to be processed as such” said El Paso Sector Border Patrol Chief Gloria I. Chavez. “Identity fraud is a common tactic used by TCOs to take advantage of migrants who do not know the legal consequences of their actions as they attempt to deceive authorities.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 WSP warns: sharp rise HOV lane violations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-state-increase-hov-violations/281-a0630da3-dba5-46a2-bd6c-b1dd2afe1a7c?ref=exit-recirc">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-state-increase-hov-violations/281-a0630da3-dba5-46a2-bd6c-b1dd2afe1a7c?ref=exit-recirc</a>
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — Washington State Patrol troopers have seen a significant increase in drivers illegally using high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes just this past week, as they caught 170 HOV violators in just a 2.5-hour span in King County.</p> <p>"By the time that HOV violators sees us there's a very good chance we already saw them," said Trooper Robert Reyer, the Public Information Officer with Washington State Patrol District 1.</p> <p>Reyer believes drivers in Washington need a quick refresher on who can use HOV lanes.</p> <p>"Those vehicles include public transportation vehicles, motorcycles, cars that don't have less than a pre-specified number of occupants inside them and some private transportation providers, if their vehicles can carry eight or more passengers," said Reyer.</p> <p>Passengers don't include dummies or skeletons either, which some drivers have tried to use in the past and just because roads are getting busier, doesn't mean that's an excuse to break the law.</p>

	<p>"Now that we're going back to pre-COVID numbers it seems like this patience has faded and now if you're stuck in traffic, it's very tempting to hop over into that HOV lane and then use that," said Reyer.</p> <p>Last year in King County there were 6,035 HOV violators. Summer is not even over yet, and King County is already nearing that mark at 5,614. Meanwhile, Pierce and Thurston Counties have surpassed their totals from 2021, which was 750. This year alone, there have already been 801 HOV violators.</p> <p>"We're looking at a fine about \$189 for the first violation, if somebody gets caught a second time within two years of violating this law then we're looking at a fine of \$339," said Reyer.</p> <p>Reyer wants drivers to know, there are troopers working around the clock to ensure rules are being followed, and the roads and highways are safe.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/21 Man wounded Snohomish Co. shooting</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/1-killed-in-snohomish-county-shooting/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/1-killed-in-snohomish-county-shooting/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>A man suffered life-threatening injuries in a shooting near 12400 Admiralty Way in Everett on Sunday, according to the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>A search for the suspect was conducted using K9s and drones, but there was no indication he had been found. The man was last seen running north from the scene, according to the Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>The suspect was described as a 5-foot-8 male with short hair, wearing a green shirt and tan pants.</p> <p>Initially, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office reported the shooting as a homicide, but a spokesperson later said the statement was issued in error, and the victim of Sunday's shooting was clinging to life at an Everett hospital, KIRO 7 was first to report.</p> <p>Sunday's shooting came on the heels of a separate fatal shooting 25 miles farther south in Snohomish County on Saturday. In that incident, a man died after being shot in the 21100 block of Gun Club Road. A suspect was soon arrested.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>08/20 Surge: illegal weapons smuggling to Haiti</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/illegal-weapons-smuggling-us-haiti-surges-officials/story?id=88636206">https://abcnews.go.com/International/illegal-weapons-smuggling-us-haiti-surges-officials/story?id=88636206</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>U.S. authorities in South Florida are stepping up efforts to crackdown on a recent surge in weapons smuggling to Haiti and the Caribbean, according to Homeland Security officials.</p> <p>An unusual uptick in the number of high-caliber weapons coming out of the U.S. is believed to be connected with spikes in violence driven by transnational criminal organizations.</p> <p>"It's been alarming and disturbing to see the spike of violence coincide with a spike in weapons trafficking out of Miami towards Haiti," Anthony Salisbury, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations Miami, told ABC News.</p> <p>HSI is actively pursuing dozens of open investigations in the region related to smuggling. Officials are hesitant to release exact numbers and specifics to avoid compromising prosecutions.</p> <p>"We will push these investigations as far as we can," Salisbury said. "It's not just the people buying guns, it's not just the people shipping guns -- we will go after and, if we can, prosecute the individuals who are receiving the guns out of these countries. That does include both trying to extradite them back to the United States in some cases and working our foreign offices and our foreign counterparts to help prosecute them down in these countries."</p>

	<p>The enforcement crackdown has been coordinated through multiple federal agencies that are part of specialized teams including Customs and Border Protection, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Department of Commerce.</p> <p>One area of particular focus is the Miami river, home to one of the most unique ports of entry in the United States due to the distance it spans into the interior of the United States.</p> <p>The Haitian freighters that dock along the 3-4 mile stretch of river are different than the hyper-organized container ships typically seen at large ports. These smaller vessels that dock along the Miami river are more like giant tugboats. Individual packages are often loaded by hand, making it a prime situation for smuggling.</p> <p>"We're not going to tolerate this activity," Salisbury said. "We're not going to let South Florida willingly be a launching pad for weapons heading down to these countries."</p> <p>Last month marked one year since the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse which led to a scourge of gang violence that persists today.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/21 Albania: arrests; spying raid arms factory</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/21/two-russians-and-one-ukrainian-arrested-after-suspected-spying-raid-on-albanian-arms-factory">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/21/two-russians-and-one-ukrainian-arrested-after-suspected-spying-raid-on-albanian-arms-factory</a>
GIST	<p>Two Russians and a Ukrainian have been arrested after an apparent bungled spying raid on a military base and arms factory in central Albania, the Albanian defence ministry said on Saturday.</p> <p>One of the male suspects allegedly attacked the guards with a paralysing spray while trying to take photographs of the Gramsh factory, which is used for dismantling derelict weapons, the ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>The ministry added that two of its soldiers were injured while trying to stop the raid, but the three foreign nationals were detained.</p> <p>Albanian prime minister Edi Rama said the three individuals are “suspected of espionage”.</p> <p>“Three citizens with Russian and Ukrainian passports have tried to enter the factory,” the ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>“The officers who were guarding the plant reacted immediately, but during their efforts to stop the three foreign nationals, two of our soldiers were injured,” the statement said, adding the conditions of the soldiers was stable.</p> <p>“In an attempt to escape control, one of the Russian nationals, identified by the initials MZ, 24 [years old], used neuromuscular spray on the two security guards,” after he was tackled by the guards, the ministry added.</p> <p>Two others, a Russian woman identified as ST, aged 33, and an Ukrainian man, identified as FA, 25 years old, were also arrested in the vicinity.</p> <p>“What pride for the military guards who neutralized three individuals suspected of espionage,” Rama wrote on Twitter, adding: “Now let’s wait for the full clarification of this event.”</p> <p>During the summer holidays Albania is visited by many Russians and Ukrainian tourists. The Gramsh military base is more than 70km away from the beaches.</p> <p>During communism, the Albanian Gramsh plant was used to produce the Russian type of rifle AK-47.</p>



	<p>According to the ministry's website, the plant today provides manufacturing services for the defence industry, without giving more details.</p> <p>Albania has been a member of Nato since 2009.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Arrest: man threatened 'day of retribution'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/us/turning-point-usa-threat-florida.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/us/turning-point-usa-threat-florida.html</a>
GIST	<p>A San Antonio man who investigators say sympathizes with incel — or involuntary celibate — ideology was arrested on charges of threatening a conservative student conference and having child pornography on his phone, according to a federal criminal complaint.</p> <p>The man, Alejandro Richard Velasquez Gomez, 19, wrote in a July 18 Instagram post that July 22 — the beginning of a three-day Turning Point USA conference in Tampa, Fla. — would be “the day of retribution,” according to a federal criminal complaint filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas on Aug. 11.</p> <p>Mr. Velasquez, who went by the name LatinoZoomer on Instagram, described that day as when “I will have revenge against all of humanity, which all of you will pay for my suffering. SAS will be the turning point of the LatinoZoomer lore,” according to the criminal complaint.</p> <p>Investigators said “SAS” was a reference to Turning Point USA's Student Action Summit, which this year featured remarks by former President Donald J. Trump and several other stars of right-wing politics.</p> <p>The criminal complaint did not make clear why Mr. Velasquez was targeting Turning Point USA, a group founded in 2012 to promote activism among young conservatives that is known for its Professor Watchlist project, which sets out to “expose and document” what it describes as “leftist propaganda in the classroom.”</p> <p>The group did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Saturday. A public defender for Mr. Velasquez, Molly Roth, did not immediately return phone and email messages late Saturday.</p> <p>Investigators with the Federal Bureau of Investigation said that the post by Mr. Velasquez, which included an image of him sitting in a car, echoed a video by Elliot Rodger, whom they described as a central figure of the incel movement and who in May 2014 <a href="#">killed six people in a rampage</a> in Isla Vista, Calif., before fatally shooting himself.</p> <p>Mr. Rodger, who was a student at Santa Barbara City College, posted a video to YouTube the day before that attack in which he spoke of the women who rejected him and life as a 22-year-old virgin. He said, “Tomorrow is the day of retribution. The day I will have my retribution against humanity. Against all of you.”</p> <p>Federal investigators wrote in the complaint that incel ideology “has an extreme hatred towards, and endorses violence against, women and sexually active people.”</p> <p>According to the complaint, <a href="#">which was reported by the San Antonio Express-News</a>, users who saw Mr. Velasquez's July 18 post took it seriously, with one commenting that the F.B.I. had been contacted. Investigators also learned that Mr. Velasquez had booked a flight to Tampa from Austin, Texas, on July 22, though the flight had been canceled the night before, the complaint said.</p> <p>Federal investigators said the Tampa Police Department obtained a search warrant for Mr. Velasquez on July 21 and charged him with sending written or electronic threats to kill, injure or conduct a mass shooting or an act of terrorism, a second-degree felony.</p>



	According to the complaint, the local authorities arrested Mr. Velasquez on July 22 while the F.B.I. executed a search warrant and seized his phone, on which they found images of child pornography.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Crime: death of downtown in 3 major cities</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11126101/Portland-San-Francisco-Cleveland-Americas-deserted-downtown-areas.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11126101/Portland-San-Francisco-Cleveland-Americas-deserted-downtown-areas.html</a>
GIST	<p>San Francisco, Cleveland and <a href="#">Portland</a> have the most deserted downtowns in the US as soaring crime rates in the Democratic cities scare away workers and tourists.</p> <p>In a recent <a href="#">study</a> by the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of <a href="#">California</a> Berkeley, San Francisco's downtown area was found to be only 31 percent active over the spring of 2022 when compared to pre-pandemic levels, with Cleveland at 36 percent and Portland at 41 percent.</p> <p>Meanwhile, cities like Salt Lake City, Utah, Bakersfield, California and Columbus <a href="#">Ohio</a> are enjoying the fastest comeback, seeing their downtown activity go up by more than 110 percent since 2019.</p> <p>By tracking more than 18 million smartphone users traveling through America's busiest downtowns, researchers found that the three cities, which have been plagued by a spike in crime, are trailing in COVID-19 recovery.</p> <p>According to the latest available FBI Unified Crime Report, San Francisco had the highest overall crime rate of the 20 largest cities in the United States, recording 6,917 crimes per 100,000 population in 2019.</p> <p>That was more than double the crime rates in New York and Los Angeles, and well above the rates in the next largest US cities: Chicago, Houston, and Phoenix.</p> <p>A year later following the Black Lives Matter protests, the call to defund the police grew among Democratic leaders.</p> <p>San Francisco Mayor London Breed demanded cities defund the police last year, announcing that the Golden Gate City would be one of the first to do so and promising to slice \$120million from the budgets of its police and sheriff's departments.</p> <p>The city also greenlit its first open-air drug market in San Francisco's civic center, which spurred vagrants in homeless encampments across the city to use illegal substances out in broad daylight.</p> <p>Breed has since made a screeching U-turn and announced she was asking the city's Board of Supervisors for more money to be given to the police to stamp out drug dealing, car break-ins, and theft.</p> <p>Crime remains stubbornly high in the Golden Gate City, with overall crime up 7.4 percent as of August 14 compared to the same time last year.</p> <p>Assaults are up nearly 12 percent, and robberies are up 2.4 percent. Thefts have spiked by 17.5 percent compared to last year, and rapes have also increased by 9.5 percent.</p> <p>In June, citizens fed up with the state of their city voted to oust woke District Attorney Chesa Boudin, whose anti-incarceration policies have been widely panned as causing the ongoing crisis.</p> <p>He was originally elected on a platform of criminal justice reform, but his notoriously progressive laws have been widely blamed for rising crime and homelessness in the Bay Area since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>During Boudin's time in office, 'smash-and-grab' robberies became commonplace, with thieves brazenly raiding store shelves in broad daylight, only to avoid charges thanks to Boudin's lax policies.</p>

He has since been replaced by Brooke Jenkins, 40, who cleaned house after taking her old boss' job as both she and Breed vowed to crack down on soaring crime and increasingly prevalent open-air drug markets in the city.

The city's open-air drug market project was terminated and would be shut down by the end of the year.

Breed called for progressive policies that have allowed criminal behavior to make a mockery of the city's famed tolerance and compassion to be replaced with 'more aggressive policing.'

Breed said she plans to introduce legislation that allows law enforcement officers real-time access to surveillance video in certain situations, as well as measures that would make it harder to sell stolen goods.

'It's time the reign of criminals who are destroying our city, it is time for it to come to an end,' she said. 'And it comes to an end when we take the steps to be more aggressive with law enforcement, more aggressive with the changes in our policies.'

Meanwhile, in Cleveland, the city is urgently trying to recover from its historically high crime rate, which saw an average of 10,435 arrests in the past three years.

As of the first half of the year, the city has only reported 3,764 arrests, with weapon charges sinking by 51 percent since last year, with police reporting a 49 percent drop in guns confiscated.

Drug arrests have dropped by 32 percent since the same time last year, and there were 29 percent fewer arrests for grand theft auto.

But police are still condensing with high homicide rates, reporting 90 killings as of August, only slightly down from the 101 murders reroded by the same time last year.

In 2021, 169 people died in homicides, more than double the figure from a decade earlier. In 2020, 179 people were killed, a marked increase over 2019's number of 122.

Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb has helped with the turnaround in the city and is currently looking to end a federal court oversight of the city's police force in order to allow officers to crackdown on violent crime.

'The quickest we can get out of this decree, the better it will be for the police department and the taxpayers,' Bibb told reporters on Tuesday. 'I am working as quickly as I possibly can to get out of it.'

Sporting the third-worst recovery in the downtown area, Portland has also been impacted by a rise in crime and homelessness, with calls to defund the police echoing loudly in the Oregon city.

Portland's federal courthouse and Apple Store, the sites of two large confrontations between protesters and police during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, remain closed off.

John Tapogna, a policy adviser to Portland economic research firm ECONorthwest, told The Oregonian, that the empty buildings serve as a lingering warning over the state of the city.

'It certainly sends a signal to anybody who just passes by that something's still off in this downtown,' he said.

'You don't have to look very hard beyond toward those gates to see numerous blocks, still with a lot of plywood.'

And along with shuttered businesses, homeless encampments have grown severely in certain neighborhoods throughout the city.

One realtor in the area said that she's seen a surge of residents moving to the suburbs over the past two years.

'Most people don't want to have to worry about if they can leave their car parked in their driveway overnight without maybe having it broken into,' Lauren Iaquina told KGW8.

The real estate broker said it's a 'testy subject,' and said the issue can be unpredictable due to homeless people settling down wherever they want.

The drug crisis in Portland, especially among homeless communities, has become unmanageable for authorities in the area.

Oregon was the first state in the United States to decriminalize possession of personal-use amounts of heroin, methamphetamine, LSD, oxycodone, and other drugs after voters approved a ballot measure in 2020 to decriminalize hard drugs.

A person found with personal amounts of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and other drugs receives a citation, like a traffic ticket, with the maximum \$100 fine waived if they call a hotline for a health assessment.

The state's program, which has been promoted as a way to establish and fund addiction recovery centers that would offer people aid instead of incarceration, is being watched as a potential model for other states.

But drug overdose deaths in the state also hit an all-time high in 2021 with 1069, a 41 percent increase from 2020, Fox News reported.

And along with a rise in overdoses, crime also saw a spike in Portland, with police reporting a 23.4 percent rise in overall crime in the first half of the year compared to the same time in 2021.

Robbery is up 51 percent, and although homicides fell by 12.2 percent, the number of shooting incidents reported in the city as of June was at 670, prompting Mayor Ted Wheeler to issue an emergency declaration over gun violence in the city.

Detroit stood as having the fourth worst downtown in the U.S. at 42 percent activity compared to 2019, with Chicago following at 43 percent.

The Windy City is among several cities across the US to be hit by rampant shoplifting, and even its Magnificent Mile, the once highly-populated retail destination, is now dotted with empty storefronts as businesses are being driven away by the brazen thieves.

Observers have pinned some of the blame on Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who backed calls to defund the police in the wake of BLM protests in 2020 before u-turning after a Chicago policewoman was shot dead.

Others have pinned blame on District Attorney Kim Foxx, who was widely accused of meddling in the Jussie Smollett case, after she stopped pursuing shoplifters who stole less than \$1,000.

Shoplifting cases grew more common following a December 2016 motion from Foxx that mandated Chicago prosecutors only issue felony charges for the theft of property over \$1,000.

San Francisco's mayor was paid \$351,000 in 2021, the most in the nation, despite the city's leading crime rate among major metropolitan areas.

Mayor London Breed's generous compensation makes her the highest-earning mayor in the US, even though San Francisco is just the 17th largest city by population.

Last year, Breed out-earned her counterparts in the nation's biggest cities, making nearly \$100,000 more than New York City Mayor Eric Adam is expected to earn this year.

Breed's salary was also more than double the average San Francisco city employee's salary of \$127,000 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, according to data compiled by The San Francisco Chronicle.

However, Breed was not the highest-paid city employee in San Francisco last year, a distinction that went to the city pension fund's chief investment officer, who earned \$601,610.

It comes after Breed performed a dramatic U-turn on her 'defund the police' strategy as she called for 'more aggressive policing' to crack down on rampant crime.

According to the latest available national data, San Francisco has the highest overall crime rate of the 20 largest cities in the United States.

The Golden Gate City recorded 6,917 crimes per 100,000 population in 2019, according to the latest available FBI Unified Crime Report.

That was more than double the crime rates in New York and Los Angeles, and well above the rates in the next largest US cities: Chicago, Houston, and Phoenix.

US crime rates have increased in most cities since the FBI's last national report, but the federal report provides the most consistent basis for comparison.

Breed had previously demanded cities defund the police last year, announcing that San Francisco would be one of the first to do so and promising to slice \$120million from the budgets of its police and sheriff's departments.

But Breed made a screeching U-turn and announced she was asking the city's Board of Supervisors for more money to be given to the police to stamp out drug dealing, car break-ins, and theft.

Announcing a crime crackdown, she argued that San Francisco officers should get aggressive and 'less tolerant of all the bulls\*\*\* that has destroyed our city', as she went back on her plans to defund the police.

'It's time the reign of criminals who are destroying our city, it is time for it to come to an end,' she said. 'And it comes to an end when we take the steps to be more aggressive with law enforcement, more aggressive with the changes in our policies.'

Breed called for progressive policies that have allowed criminal behavior to make a mockery of the city's famed tolerance and compassion to be replaced with 'more aggressive policing.'

Breed said she plans to introduce legislation that allows law enforcement officers real-time access to surveillance video in certain situations, as well as measures that would make it harder to sell stolen goods.

Her comments were a complete U-turn from last year, when she announced plans to redirect \$120million from the police department to a combination of new and existing programs for the African-American community.

The movement to defund the police picked up steam during 2020's protests following the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

But as she called to redirect funds away from the police toward community ventures, it was revealed the city spent \$2.6million on her security detail in 2020.

	San Francisco spent \$12.4million to protect Breed between 2015 and 2020, with the bill rising from \$1.7million in 2015 to \$2.6 million last year, according to information obtained by public transparency website Openthebooks.com and compiled by Forbes.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Mexico: 83 face arrests in missing students</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/20/world/ayotzinapa-students-disappearance-arrest-warrants/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/20/world/ayotzinapa-students-disappearance-arrest-warrants/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)A court in Mexico on Friday ordered the arrest warrants of 83 people allegedly involved in the 2014 <a href="#">disappearance of 43 students</a>, the prosecutor's office said in a statement.</p> <p>The orders were issued against "20 military commanders and troop personnel from battalions 27 and 41 in the city of Iguala, as well as five administrative and judicial authorities from the state of Guerrero; 26 police officers from Huitzuco; six from Iguala and one from Cocula; plus 11 state police from Guerrero and 14 members of the Guerreros Unidos criminal group," the statement said.</p> <p>The group is accused of "organized crime, forced disappearance, torture, homicide and crimes against the administration of justice," the prosecutor's office said.</p> <p>The prosecutor's office did not identify those allegedly involved and only added that both the arrests and the accusations in each case "will be disclosed in the corresponding criminal process."</p> <p>As of Saturday afternoon, the institutions had not made a public statement on the arrest warrants. CNN asked them for comments, and they have not responded.</p> <p>The students had been visiting the southwestern city of Iguala from a teacher's college in Ayotzinapa when their buses were intercepted by local police and the federal military forces in September 2014. Exactly what happened after remains unknown, since most of the missing students were never found. But bullet-riddled buses were later seen in the city's streets with shattered windows and blood.</p> <p>Survivors from the original group of 100 said their buses had been stopped by armed police officers and soldiers who suddenly opened fire. The case ignited international outrage.</p> <p>The judge's decision Friday was released hours after the former attorney general of Mexico, Jesús Murillo Karam, was also arrested in relation to the disappearances. Murillo Karam led the state's investigation into the disappearance.</p> <p>The prosecutor's office said it considers him a suspect of "the crimes of forced disappearance, torture and against the administration of justice, in the 'Ayotzinapa' case."</p> <p>CNN does not know if Murillo Karam has legal representation or how he declares himself before the accusations.</p> <p>The former attorney general's arrest and the issuance of the arrest warrants took place a day after a government truth commission presented a report concluding the disappearance of the students was a "crime of the state," in which members of "the Guerreros Unidos criminal group and agents from various institutions of the Mexican state" participated, Mexico's Undersecretary for Human Rights, Population and Migration Alejandro Encinas said.</p> <p>Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said on Friday that the government will continue to work to capture those involved in the crime and find out what exactly happened to the missing students.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Mexico arrests former attorney general</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/19/mexico-disappeared-students-ayotzinapa/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/19/mexico-disappeared-students-ayotzinapa/</a>

MEXICO CITY — Mexican authorities arrested the country's former attorney general on Friday and accused him of torture and forced disappearance in the mass kidnapping of 43 students in 2014, as the government made its boldest move yet to resolve one of the most severe human rights scandals in recent decades.

The arrest stunned Mexicans, coming after eight years of slow-moving investigations and what investigators have called a coverup under the previous president, Enrique Peña Nieto. On Thursday, the government's point person on the case, Alejandro Encinas, labeled the disappearances a "crime of state" that involved police, the armed forces and civilian officials, in addition to a drug-dealing gang based in Guerrero state.

Scores of people have been arrested in the case, including police and alleged gang members, with many subsequently released because of a lack of evidence or signs that they were tortured. But Jesús Murillo Karam, the former attorney general detained Friday, was the highest-ranking former official to be charged. Senior Mexican politicians historically have enjoyed impunity even as allegations of corruption have swirled around the government.

Murillo Karam did not immediately issue a plea, and it was not possible to locate his attorney.

The arrest "is a clear sign of the National Prosecutor's Office interest in fully investigating the obstruction of justice and human rights violations that occurred" in the case "and holding officials at all levels accountable for their illegal actions," said Maureen Meyer, the vice president of programs at the Washington Office on Latin America.

Still, some analysts questioned whether Mexico's weak, ineffectual justice system could successfully win convictions in the complex crime. Alejandro Hope, a security analyst, tweeted that the case could turn into "a long back-and-forth, in which both sides wind up litigating the investigation and there is never anything that resembles justice."

The 43 students from the rural Ayotzinapa teachers' college were last seen in the hands of local police in the southern city of Iguala on Sept. 26, 2014. The students had commandeered several buses to go to a protest rally, following a local custom. But that night, police and other gunmen attacked the vehicles. Murillo Karam, who was in charge of the initial investigation, said in 2015 that the police handed the students over to a drug gang, Guerreros Unidos, which burned their bodies at a dump in the nearby city of Cocula.

International legal and forensic experts have disputed that narrative, as have the attorney general's office and a truth and justice commission established by the current president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Encinas said Thursday that the students probably unwittingly stole a bus loaded with drugs or money that was part of the gang's courier system for sending narcotics to the United States. The military and federal and state police took no action to stop the mass kidnapping, he said — even though they were aware of it thanks to surveillance systems and an army spy who had infiltrated the student group.

"Federal and state authorities at the highest levels were indifferent and negligent," said Encinas, the undersecretary for human rights, at his Thursday news conference. His remarks suggested that authorities might be willing to take on powerful people and institutions involved in the attack or coverup, such as the military. He said, however, that there was no evidence pointing to Peña Nieto's involvement.

The Ayotzinapa case generated worldwide condemnation and triggered mass protests in Mexico. It focused attention on the burgeoning crisis of the disappeared, whose numbers have now soared to more than 100,000. Most have vanished since President Felipe Calderón declared a war on drug cartels in 2006. The military, crime gangs and corrupt security officials working for traffickers have all played a role, authorities say.

Murillo Karam, a member of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, was detained Friday outside his home without resistance, authorities said.

	López Obrador took office pledging to solve the case, but there have been no convictions. The remains of three of the students have been found and identified, and Encinas said the others are believed to be dead.
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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 Colombia cocaine trade at historic levels</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/20/colombia-cocaine-decriminalize-petro/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/20/colombia-cocaine-decriminalize-petro/</a>
GIST	<p>BOGOTÁ, Colombia — It's the largest producer of cocaine in the world, the source of more than 90 percent of the drug seized in the United States. It's home to the largest Drug Enforcement Administration office overseas. And for decades, it's been a key partner in Washington's never-ending "war on drugs."</p> <p>Now, Colombia is calling for an end to that war. It wants instead to lead a global experiment: decriminalizing cocaine.</p> <p>Two weeks after taking office, the country's first leftist government is proposing an end to "prohibition" and the start of a government-regulated cocaine market. Through legislation and alliances with other leftist governments in the region, officials in this South American nation hope to turn their country into a laboratory for drug decriminalization.</p> <p>"It is time for a new international convention that accepts that the war on drugs has failed," President Gustavo Petro said in his inaugural address this month.</p> <p>It's a radical turn in this historically conservative country, one that could upend its longstanding — and lucrative — counternarcotics relationship with the United States. U.S. officials past and present are signaling concern; the drug was responsible for an <a href="#">estimated</a> 25,000 overdose deaths in the United States last year.</p> <p>"The United States and the Biden administration is not a supporter of decriminalization," said Jonathan Finer, the White House deputy national security adviser, who met with Petro here before his inauguration.</p> <p>A former DEA official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because his current employer had not authorized him to speak on the matter, said he feared the move would limit the agency's ability to collaborate with the Colombians on drug trafficking investigations.</p> <p>"It would incrementally kill the cooperation," he said. "It would be devastating, not just regionally, but globally. Everyone would be fighting from the outside in."</p> <p>Billions of U.S. dollars have funded a strategy focused largely on destroying the cocaine trade at its point of origin: the fields of rural Colombia. U.S. training and intelligence have propelled Colombia's decades-long military efforts to eradicate coca, the base plant for cocaine, and dismantle drug trafficking groups. And yet more than a half century after President Richard M. Nixon declared drugs "America's public enemy number one," the Colombian trade has reached record levels. Coca cultivation has tripled in the last decade, according to U.S. figures.</p> <p>Felipe Tascón, Petro's drug czar, said the Colombians aim to take advantage of a rare moment in which many key governments in the region — including the cocaine-producing countries Colombia, Peru and Bolivia — are <a href="#">led by leftists</a>.</p> <p>In his first interview since being named to the job, the economist said he wants to meet with his counterparts in those countries to discuss decriminalization at the regional level. Eventually, he hopes a unified regional bloc can renegotiate international drug conventions at the United Nations.</p> <p>Domestically, Petro's administration is planning to back legislation to decriminalize cocaine and marijuana. It plans to put an end to aerial spraying and the manual eradication of coca, which critics say unfairly targets poor rural farmers. By regulating the sale of cocaine, Tascón argued, the government would wrest the market from armed groups and cartels.</p>



“Drug traffickers know that their business depends on it being prohibited,” Tascón said. “If you regulate it like a public market ... the high profits disappear and the drug trafficking disappears.”

He aims to reframe his job not as “counternarcotics” or “anti-drug” but rather “drug policy.”

“The government’s program doesn’t talk about the problem of drugs,” he said. “It talks about the problems generated by the prohibition of drugs.”

Tascón has spoken about his plans with his counterparts in Peru. Ricardo Soberón, head of the Peruvian anti-drug agency DEVIDA, said it was too early to say whether Lima would support decriminalization, but he would welcome a regional debate about new approaches. Petro could find an ally in Bolivia, where in the 2000s the government of Evo Morales began allowing farmers to legally grow coca in limited quantities.

As the most important U.S. ally against cocaine, Colombia is an unlikely pioneer in decriminalizing it. But it’s also the country that has suffered the most from the war on drugs. Tascón said it’s the country where the need for a new strategy is perhaps the most urgent.

The point was driven home by Colombia’s truth commission. The panel, appointed as part of the country’s 2016 peace accord between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, recommended in June that the government move toward “strict legal regulation of drugs.”

In a report, the commission said the militarized approach against drug trafficking intensified the fighting in the half century of conflict that killed hundreds of thousands of Colombians.

The Washington-based National Security Archive, an independent nonprofit, provided the commission with declassified documents showing the U.S. government knew its approach would lead to many years of bloodshed in Colombia.

“We see no chance that the growing and trafficking of narcotics in Colombia could be suppressed and kept that way ... without a bloody, expensive, and prolonged coercive effort,” read a 1983 national intelligence estimate provided to The Washington Post by the archive.

“One way to stop this war from happening again is to rethink the way we relate to coca and cocaine,” said Estefanía Ciro, who led the truth commission’s drug policy researchers. “The important thing is not that the markets exist or that there is coca, but the violence that the cocaine market produces.”

Finer, Biden’s deputy national security adviser, said the Petro administration’s approach to drug policy overlaps with the holistic strategy the Biden administration announced last year for Colombia. But not on decriminalization.

“Colombia is a sovereign country. It will make its own decisions,” he said. “This is a relationship that is bigger and broader than just our cooperation and our collaboration on counternarcotics.”

A delegation of U.S. officials, including the assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, plan to meet with Petro administration officials here next week.

USAID Administrator Samantha Power, who attended Petro’s inauguration here, said U.S. officials “have clearly heard [his] message.”

Jim Crotty, a former deputy chief of staff at the DEA, argued that a legal cocaine trade “is not going to get rid of the illegal trade.”

“As we’ve seen before in Colombia and elsewhere, there’s always someone to fill that vacuum,” Crotty said.

Colombians are currently allowed to carry small amounts of marijuana and cocaine. But proposed legislation aims to go much further, decriminalizing and regulating their use.

Decriminalizing cocaine will face an uphill battle in a divided Congress. Taking the debate to the international stage will be still more difficult.

Honduran president, a Trump ally implicated in drug trafficking, tries to win over Biden

But it’s a discussion Latin America has already had — on marijuana. In 2013, Uruguay became the first country in the world to legalize the production and sale of recreational cannabis.

“We have to open up the debate and break the taboo,” said Milton Romani, who served as secretary general of Uruguay’s national drug board. “It might be a long road, but I don’t think it’s impossible.”

Colombia would have the “moral authority” to lead this effort, he said, “because so many people have died for this.”

Mellington Cortés has seen this bloodshed firsthand.

In 2017, he was one of hundreds of coca farmers who were gathered in the Nariño department, protesting forced coca eradication by security forces, when police started firing into the crowd. One gunshot struck him. Another killed his brother, one of seven protesters who died that day. The killings are still under investigation.

The 45-year-old continues to grow coca, which pays more than twice the \$130 a month he made as a driver.

“It’s a secret to no one that we grow coca to survive, to maintain our families, our children,” Cortés said. “There are no other resources here. We’ve been forgotten.”

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HEADLINE	<b>08/20 India slow progress violence on women</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/world/asia/india-rape-muslim-hindu.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/20/world/asia/india-rape-muslim-hindu.html</a>
GIST	<p>GODHRA, India — For 15 years, as she moved from house to house for her family’s safety, Bilkis Bano waited for assurance from the courts that the men who gang-raped her and murdered many of her relatives would spend the rest of their lives in prison.</p> <p>That finally came in 2017. In the years that followed, Ms. Bano said, she had been learning “slowly to live with my trauma” from the grisly communal bloodshed that racked the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002 and devastated her family. She and her husband were now ready to settle into a new home close to relatives and restart their business selling goats and buffaloes.</p> <p>Then, this past week, the 11 perpetrators walked free, welcomed with sweets and garlands.</p> <p>“The trauma of the past 20 years washed over me again,” Ms. Bano said in a statement released by her lawyer on Wednesday. “I am still numb.”</p> <p>She has stopped talking to anyone outside her home, Yakub Rasul, her husband, said in an interview. “They are now out,” Mr. Rasul said. “We are thinking, ‘What will they do to us?’”</p> <p>The case of Bilkis Bano, a Muslim woman who was raped and her 3-year-old daughter killed by a Hindu mob, is a tragic reflection of India’s halting progress in addressing violence against women and of the deepening divides engendered by swelling Hindu nationalism.</p>

The convicts' early release came as the country marks 10 years since the horrific gang-rape of a young woman on a bus in the capital, New Delhi, which set off nationwide protests and led to collective soul-searching. The result was stricter laws, police reforms, wider protections for women and a continuing push to alter attitudes.

"I have one request to every Indian: Can we change the mentality towards our women in everyday life?" Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in an address on the 75th anniversary of India's independence this past week. "It is important that in our speech and conduct, we do nothing that lowers the dignity of women."

But the freeing of the men on the same day as Mr. Modi's speech — and at the same time that the government has faced criticism for jailing activists and voices of dissent for long stretches — showed how easily political machinations can undermine efforts at justice, analysts said.

Mr. Modi was the top official in Gujarat at the time of the 2002 sectarian violence. Then as now, he is accused by critics of fanning and exploiting the country's religious polarization to consolidate the Hindu base of his Bharatiya Janata Party.

Some analysts saw the men's release, after about 15 years in prison, as related to elections scheduled for December in Gujarat, the seat of Mr. Modi's rise, where the B.J.P. has remained in power for two decades.

"Whether they committed the crime or not, I do not know," C.K. Raulji, a governing party lawmaker who was part of a review committee that recommended the release, told the local news media.

Mr. Raulji went so far as to suggest that the men's status as high-caste Hindus argued in favor of their freedom. "Their family's activity was very good; they are Brahmin people," he said, referring to their caste. "And as it is with Brahmins, their values were also very good."

Later, facing a backlash, he claimed that his comments — which were caught on videotape — had been misconstrued.

In the spring, India's Supreme Court directed the state government to hear the men's request for release. While the state had changed its policy in 2014 to exclude perpetrators of crimes like rape and murder from such clemency, the men had asked for their case to be considered under the policy that was in place at the time of their crimes.

The review committee, stacked with members of the governing party, decided that the men should be freed, and the state government accepted the recommendation. Officials have indicated that the convicts' good behavior in prison was a factor in their release.

"It is the government's discretion to take appropriate action on the case based on its merits," said Raj Kumar, the home secretary for the Gujarat government.

The state rejected advice from the trial court against a release, Indian news media reported. Mr. Kumar confirmed to The New York Times that the court's opinion was among the elements that the committee deliberated, without providing detail. Legal experts worried about the precedent: that the painstaking work of pushing a case to a resolution through a backlogged judicial system could easily be overturned.

"The state governments are entrusted to follow the rules properly and wisely while exercising them," said Abhay Thipsay, a retired judge. "Otherwise you can release people within months of their being sentenced."

Ms. Bano's case stems from a gruesome period of sectarian violence when Mr. Modi was chief minister of Gujarat. A series of riots began after nearly 60 Hindu pilgrims were burned alive on a train. An initial inquiry declared the fire accidental, while subsequent commissions and court cases found it was the result of a conspiracy by a Muslim mob to attack Hindu pilgrims.

Retaliatory violence then swept across large parts of Gujarat, leaving more than 1,000 people, most of them Muslims, dead.

Ms. Bano was repeatedly raped by her assailants despite her pleas that she was five months pregnant. One of them took her 3-year-old daughter and “killed the infant by smashing her on the ground,” investigators testified. In all, 14 members of her family were killed as they tried to flee. The heads of several were severed; others were buried “in a pit with common salt” for decomposing.

In the two decades since, Mr. Modi’s lieutenants have assiduously tried to distance him from accusations that he and his administration looked the other way as the Hindu mobs rampaged. These officials have called the accusations a conspiracy by a “triad of political parties opposing the B.J.P., some journalists and some NGOs” to stain Mr. Modi’s image.

The Bano case was unusual for that period of violence in Gujarat not only because it reached a verdict, but also because at its center was evidence provided by the country’s Central Bureau of Investigation at a time when a B.J.P.-led coalition was in power in New Delhi.

To ensure a fair trial, India’s Supreme Court shifted the case to the neighboring state of Maharashtra. The central investigating body detailed how local police officials had conspired to cover up the crime, accusing them of “fabricating documents and causing disappearance of evidence.”

The men were sentenced to life in prison in 2008, and their appeal was rejected in 2017.

Today, a narrow road snaking through homes covered in terra cotta roofs and past abandoned farmland leads to the spot where residents say Ms. Bano and her family were attacked on March 3, 2002. A rock-faced hill with thorny vegetation overlooks the forested area where, they said, Ms. Bano was dragged and raped. Cows swim in the waters of a river nearby.

About six miles downhill, past mahua trees and colorful snack stands, is Ms. Bano’s former home in the Hindu-dominated village of Randhikpur. It is now occupied by fruit vendors and shops selling wholesale grains.

Directly across the road is where Radheshyam Shah, one of the 11 convicts, was welcomed by his wife and sisters this past week with homemade sweets. “People are saying, ‘They fed sweets to the convicts,’” Ashish Shah, Mr. Shah’s younger brother, said. “Are we not allowed to celebrate?”

The older Mr. Shah, who had returned from prison three days earlier, said over the phone that he was “innocent” and had left with his family for the state of Rajasthan on a Hindu pilgrimage.

For Ms. Bano and her family, the message of the welcome was entirely different. “If you are welcoming these rapists back into society, what will happen to this country’s women?” Mr. Rasul, her husband, said.

Ms. Bano had just begun seeking some semblance of normalcy in her life, cooking for the family and taking care of their five children, Mr. Rasul said. Three of them are teenage girls, and one they named Saleha, after the child they lost.

They had hoped to use the compensation money they received, ordered by the Supreme Court, to start a new life. “Now, that’s all finished,” Mr. Rasul said, “because we are living in fear.”

In her appeal to the Gujarat government, Ms. Bano requested that it “give me back my right to live without fear and in peace.”

“I trusted the system,” she said. “How can justice for any woman end like this?”

HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Snohomish Co. violent crimes task force</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/rise-violent-crimes-snohomish-county-prompts-creation-task-force/5BORG56CARHI3O5F75QAL2BLMM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/rise-violent-crimes-snohomish-county-prompts-creation-task-force/5BORG56CARHI3O5F75QAL2BLMM/</a>
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — A rise in violent crimes throughout Snohomish County is prompting five agencies — including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to create a new task force.</p> <p>The Regional Violent Crimes Reduction Unit is comprised of 20 full-time team members from the Everett and Lynnwood police departments, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, Snohomish County Prosecutor's Office and the FBI.</p> <p>Everett police said the region has seen a notable increase in violent and gun-related crimes. The task force will dedicate resources and collaborate on efforts to reduce violent crime in the Everett, Lynnwood and south county region.</p> <p>Because the FBI is involved the partnership, the task force can share intelligence, which is important because officials say criminals don't recognize jurisdictional boundaries.</p> <p>Prosecutors are involved in the task force to make sure that violent crimes are investigated thoroughly enough to hold offenders accountable.</p> <p>The task force is also focusing on the issue of children being recruited by criminal groups to commit crimes.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Kent PD: dispute leads to deadly shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/dispute-between-2-men-leads-deadly-shooting-police-say/GDIBIUAV4ZCRTFBX44LPPLF6QE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/dispute-between-2-men-leads-deadly-shooting-police-say/GDIBIUAV4ZCRTFBX44LPPLF6QE/</a>
GIST	<p>KENT, Wash. — A 71-year-old Kent man was arrested Friday night for allegedly shooting and killing another man at an apartment complex.</p> <p>Kent officers were called after 6:30 p.m. to the 24600 block of Russell Road after residents of the Riverwood Apartments called 911 for a dispute between two men in the parking lot.</p> <p>When police arrived, they found a man in the parking with a gunshot wound to the stomach. He was unconscious.</p> <p>Officers performed lifesaving measures, but the 28-year-old victim died at the scene.</p> <p>An initial police investigation indicates that both men, believed to be residents at the complex, were involved in an altercation that escalated into gunfire.</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>08/19 Deadly Everett-area home invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/woman-killed-home-invasion-near-everett/JRM500JEYFF7BPVTOHIUGIZKCM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/woman-killed-home-invasion-near-everett/JRM500JEYFF7BPVTOHIUGIZKCM/</a>
GIST	<p>SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. — A Snohomish County woman was killed in an overnight home invasion.</p> <p>At around 3 a.m. on Friday, three men entered a home on 96th Street Southeast just off 19th Avenue Southeast in unincorporated Snohomish County near Everett.</p>

Deputies say a family of three — a woman, her husband and their child — were in the home when the men forced their way inside.

Courtney O’Keefe, spokesperson for the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office, says words were exchanged on the second floor of the home.

“There was a little bit of a verbal altercation between the victims and the suspect,” said O’Keefe. “I’m not aware that there was any struggle or physical contact.”

The woman in her 30s was shot and died at the scene. Her husband suffered minor injuries, and the child was not hurt.

“It’s been very difficult to see the family members arrive on scene here,” said O’Keefe. “It’s a devastating day for everyone.”

One of the intruders was wearing a mask, and another may have had his face painted.

Deputies are speaking with neighbors and asking if anyone has surveillance footage.

Ray Atsatt lives near the home where the shooting occurred. As someone who works in the security industry, he said feeling uneasy at work is one thing, but he shouldn’t feel that way in the area where he lives.

“No, not in a neighborhood that I’ve grown up in. I shouldn’t feel uneasy. I should be able to feel that if I have a problem in the neighborhood, I should be able to call law enforcement, and they should be able to deal with it in a proper amount of time,” said Atsatt.

Within the last year, two burglaries have been reported within blocks of the crime scene. Investigators do not know yet if those burglaries are connected to the home invasion.

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HEADLINE	08/19 Freeman school shooter sentenced to 40yrs
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Washington-school-shooter-sentenced-to-40-years-17385558.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Washington-school-shooter-sentenced-to-40-years-17385558.php</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Caleb Sharpe, who shot one classmate to death and wounded three others five years ago in a Washington state high school, apologized to his victims before he was sentenced Friday to at least 40 years in prison.</p> <p>Sharpe, who was 15 at the time of the 2017 shootings, pleaded guilty early this year in Spokane County Superior Court. The 20-year-old Sharpe showed no emotion as Superior Court Judge Michael Price handed down a sentence that was twice what defense attorneys had requested.</p> <p>After serving his sentence, Sharpe will have to go before a sentencing review board prior to his release, Price ruled. The board will evaluate Sharpe’s likelihood to reoffend and his level of rehabilitation.</p> <p>He will get credit for the nearly five years he has already been in custody, the judge said.</p> <p>After closing statements by attorneys for both sides, Sharpe made his first public comments since his arrest five years ago.</p> <p>“I’m sorry to this entire community,” Sharpe said Friday. “I’m sorry to the people who can’t sleep at night.”</p> <p>Sharpe also directly apologized to his three wounded victims and to Ami Strahan, the mother of 15-year-old Sam Strahan, who died in the attack.</p> <p>“Most of all I am sorry to Ami and Emily for taking Sam from them,” Sharpe said.</p>

“Evil has no place in my heart,” Sharpe said. “I can never do enough penance to pay back what I have taken. I pray for forgiveness.”

On Thursday, Ami Strahan and the three wounded girls gave statements, all saying they wanted Sharpe to serve the maximum time in prison, which was 45 years.

Sharpe brought several weapons to school the morning of Sept. 13, 2017, and opened fire in a hallway, hitting four students before he was confronted and surrendered to a custodian.

After years of court delays, Sharpe pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree murder and three counts of attempted murder in January.

On Thursday, victims Emma Nees and Gracie Jensen described what happened the day Sharpe shot them on the second-floor hallway of their school.

“As I lay there, I watched you walk by me. Lockdown alarm blaring, wearing all black with the most emotionless face I’ve ever seen,” Jensen said to Sharpe. “Shooting at my classmates as they run for their lives into classrooms. I screamed. There was nothing else I could do.”

“I started running and was so scared because I felt like I was running in slow motion,” Emma Nees said in her testimony. “My mission was to get to the nearest classroom as fast as possible. As I was running, I began thinking there’s absolutely no way I’m getting out of this.”

Ami Strahan said she was at work when friends came up to her desk and told her to get off the phone. They said there had been a shooting at Freeman High.

When she arrived at the school, she noticed she was being led to a different area than other parents: She was taken to the sheriff.

When she told Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich who she was, he just shook his head.

“I screamed twice, loud,” Strahan said. “And I fell down.”

“You took my son in the worst way possible and you have zero remorse,” Strahan told Sharpe. “You ruined my life.”

She called Sharpe a “sick, evil coward.”

Brooke Foley, Sharpe’s public defender, earlier asked the judge for a sentence of 20 years, because of Sharpe’s age and lack of maturity at the time of the shooting.

Deputy Prosecutor Sharon Hedlund agreed that Sharpe’s sentence should be below the standard range, but urged Price to issue a 35-year sentence.

On the day of the shootings, Sharpe brought a duffel bag onto his school bus which contained an AR-15 rifle and handgun, along with numerous boxes of .223 ammunition.

At school Sharpe headed straight to a second-floor hallway, where he dropped the duffel bag and removed the assault rifle. He started to load the gun, which jammed.

As Sharpe struggled to load the weapon, Strahan approached him.

“I always knew you were going to shoot up the school,” Strahan told Sharpe, according to court documents. “You know that is going to get you in trouble.”



	<p>Sharpe then pulled the pistol from under his coat and fired a single shot, striking Strahan in the stomach. Strahan collapsed forward, at which point Sharpe shot him again, this time in the face.</p> <p>Sharpe continued to walk down the hallway and shot and wounded the three girls.</p> <p>After firing into the crowd, Sharpe threw the handgun down. At this point he was confronted by custodian Joe Bowen. Sharpe raised his hands above his head in surrender as Bowen approached.</p>
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